April 3, 2017

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education & Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education & Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education & Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education & Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We, the undersigned organizations and teachers, teacher leaders, principals, other schools leaders, and advocates, write to you in support of funding for the School Leader Recruitment and Support Program (SLRSP)—the only federal program specifically focused on investing in evidence-based, locally-driven strategies to strengthen school leadership in high-need schools.

We are a group of organizations and individuals who believe that all schools can become great schools if teachers, principals, and other school leaders have the preparation and ongoing support needed to put into practice the best educational strategies and approaches. We are now working with states, districts, and schools on implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

And we all know that leadership matters. More than a decade of research shows that well-prepared, well-supported principals have a huge influence on teacher practice and student success. School leaders account for 25 percent of a school’s impact on student learning, and an above-average principal can improve student achievement by 20 percentage points. Moreover, like workers in any other profession, the best teachers want to work for the best bosses. Outstanding school leaders attract and retain great educators: fully 97 percent of teachers list principal quality as critical to their retention and career decisions—more than any other factor. And school leaders transform the lowest-performing schools, where the positive effects of strong leadership on student achievement are most pronounced. In fact, a landmark study found “virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader.”

Authorized by ESSA with bipartisan support to strengthen the School Leadership Program (SLP), SLRSP empowers states and school districts, individually or in partnership with nonprofits or institutions of higher education, to accelerate the recruitment, preparation, support, and retention of dynamic school leaders who have a measurable, positive impact on student achievement in high-need schools. Robust investment in school leadership via SLRSP is critical to achieving the major goals of ESSA and delivering on the promise of local control: strong, sustained implementation of improvement strategies in every classroom, every year, across entire schools.

Our schools should be places where great teachers thrive and all students excel. We can reach this goal by prioritizing investments in strategies that address how our schools—not just individual classrooms, but all classrooms within a school—are organized and led. Unfortunately, school leadership has historically been overlooked and underfunded, which has done a great disservice to teachers, students, and school communities who rely on the support and expertise of well-prepared, well-supported principals.

Through the FY 2018 appropriations process, we urge Congress to fund SLRSP at $30 million to seed innovative, evidence-based school leadership programs and partnerships.
Sincerely,

Achievement Network
Advance Illinois
American Federation of School Administrators
AppleTree Institute for Education Innovation
ASCD
BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life)
Bloomington Public School District 87
Center for Research and Reform in Education, Johns Hopkins University
Center for the Study of Education Policy, Illinois State University
Chicago Public Schools
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Cuddle Care, Inc.
Deans for Impact
DuPage Regional Office of Education
Educators for Excellence
Governors State University
Hope Street Group
Illinois Education Association
Kappa Delta Pi
Learning Forward
National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)
National Center on Education and the Economy
National Council of Professors of Educational Administration
National Council on Teacher Quality
National Network of State Teachers of the Year
National SAM Innovation Project (NSIP)
New Classrooms Innovation Partners
New Leaders
New Teacher Center
New York Educator Voice Fellowship
North Park University
NYC Leadership Academy
Ounce of Prevention Fund
Profound Gentlemen
Public Impact
Quincy Public Schools - District #172
Relay Graduate School of Education
Results for America
School of Education/Principal Endorsement Program, Aurora University
Schools That Can
Sonoma Charter School
Stand for Children
Success for All Foundation
TASH
Teach For America
Teach Plus
Teaching Trust
TNTP
University Council for Educational Administration
And the following individual educators, education leaders, and advocates:

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Alicia Haller  Elsie Kathleen Kane  Megan McDonald  
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Alison Welcher  Emily Appel  Michaela Fray  
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