

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
The Capitol, S-230
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol, H-232
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader
U.S. Senate
The Capitol, S-221
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol, H-204
Washington, D.C. 20515

December 14, 2017

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, and Democratic Leaders Schumer and Pelosi:

Our organizations are deeply concerned about our nation's commitment to the education of its young people and support for its educators. We urge you to ensure an adequate funding level for education moving forward and to facilitate that investment by raising the budget caps on federal spending that are currently in place. Without raising the caps, many programs will face detrimental cuts or possibly elimination. One major program that could suffer is the Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants Program.

In 2015, when Congress passed the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), it recognized that the foundation each child needs to achieve the American dream is education. Despite this, states across the nation have been facing budget shortfalls in education. The federal investment also continues to decline: in the last eight years, discretionary education spending is down \$800 million. These cuts to education are in direct conflict with the commitment Congress has made to our nation's youth, their teachers, parents, school employees and principals.

We urge you to come together and craft a budget deal that raises both the defense and non- defense discretionary caps by the same dollar amount. All federal education programs, as well as other school-related services that support students, need to be at least level-funded at the Fiscal Year 2017 levels.

One specific program we wish to highlight is the Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants Program (Title II-A of ESSA). Decades of research has proven that the most important school-based factors in student achievement are the effectiveness of teachers and school leadership. Currently funded at \$2.1 billion, Title II-A is the largest federal funding stream that directly supports teachers and school leaders.

Title II-A has seen large reductions in recent years, with some calls to eliminate the program altogether, despite the fact that many states are relying on Title II as part of their ESSA plans. Eliminating or cutting more funding for this program will have an especially negative impact on schools serving low-income and minority students, which have a concentration of inexperienced teachers and school leaders, and disproportionately face shortages for both occupations.

We must continue Title-II A investments to support teachers, school leaders, and paraprofessionals, improve instruction, and ensure that all students graduate high school poised for lifelong success. Ensuring that the budget caps are raised and that the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies bill receives its proportional share – about one third – of any increase in discretionary funding will greatly aid this effort. Thank you for your leadership on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

American Federation of School Administrators
ASCD
Learning Forward
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
New Leaders