

June 11, 2018

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:

As the FY2019 appropriations process gets underway, we, the 74 undersigned organizations, write to you **in support of \$14.5 million in 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.

The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 infused more money into domestic programs, providing an opportunity to continue funding for critical, evidence-based programs like SLRSP. Yet the program was not funded in the FY 2018 omnibus spending bill, doing a great disservice to teachers, students, and school communities who rely on the support and expertise of well-prepared, well-supported principals.

We are a group of organizations that believe our schools should be places where great teachers thrive and all students excel. We know that 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. More than a decade of research shows just how crucial it is that our schools be led by well-prepared, well-supported principals. School leaders account for 25 percent of a school's impact on student learning,ⁱ and an above-average principal can improve student achievement by 20 percentage points.ⁱⁱ 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*.ⁱⁱⁱ And school leaders transform the lowest-performing schools, where the positive effects of strong leadership on student achievement are most pronounced.^{iv} In fact, a landmark study found “virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader.”^v

Authorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act (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 effect on student achievement in high-need schools.

In the past, SLP seeded some of the country's most innovative and effective principal preparation programs^{vi}—programs that have since grown exponentially to reach many more schools, teachers, and students in need of outstanding leadership and greatly expanding the impact of the federal government's initial investment. Chicago Public Schools, for example, has had a longstanding focus on investing in leadership and has benefitted from several SLP grants over the years. These grants seeded partnerships with effective school leader development programs and helped mobilize local stakeholders to amplify targeted federal investments in leadership. During this same period, achievement gaps have narrowed dramatically, and the district was recently found to be the fastest-improving school system in the country.^{vii}

What's more, SLP grantees have helped to galvanize dramatic changes to the principal preparation sector as a whole, where there is now broad consensus that programs should adopt evidence-based practices and draw on a range of outcomes that include student achievement to assess program quality^{viii}—prompting necessary changes to the way principals are trained to lead our nation's schools in states and districts across the country.

We are now working with states, districts, and schools on implementation of ESSA. We recognize that investments in school leadership are 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.

Getting a well-prepared, well-supported principal in every school is a bipartisan cause. Through the FY 2019 appropriations process, **we urge Congress to restore funding for SLRSP at \$14.5 million** to seed innovative, evidence-based school leadership programs and partnerships that promise a return for students, schools, and communities that far exceeds this targeted investment.

Sincerely,

Achievement Network
Advance Illinois
America Forward
American Federation of School Administrators
AppleTree Institute for Education Innovation
ASCD
BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life)
BEST NC
Bloomington Public School District 87
Brown County CUSD #1
Center for Research and Reform in Education, Johns Hopkins University
Center for the Study of Education Policy, Illinois State University
Center for Urban Education Leadership, University of Illinois-Chicago
Chicago Public Schools
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional (CASEL)
Committee for Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Cuddle Care, Inc
Deans for Impact
Democrats for Education Reform
DuPage Regional Office of Education
Ed Allies
Educators for Excellence
Fred Rodgers Magnet Academy
Governors State University
Hope Street Group
Illinois Council of Professors of Educational Administration
Illinois Education Association
Illinois Federation of Teachers
Illinois State University Lab Schools
Kappa Delta Pi
LBDNH
League of Education Voters
League of United Latin American Citizens
Learning Forward
Lifeline for Courageous Leaders, LLC

McLean County Unit 5
Midwest Principals' Center
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 Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET)
National Network of State Teachers of the Year
National SAM Innovation Project, NSIP
New America
New Classrooms Innovation Partners
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
Roosevelt University
School of Education/Principal Endorsement Program, Aurora University
Schools That Can
Stand for Children
Steans Family Foundation
Success for All Foundation
TASH
Teach For America
Teach Plus
Teaching Matters
Teaching Trust
The Education Trust
TNTP
University Council for Educational Administration
University of St. Francis

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- ⁱⁱ Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Scholastic Inc. (2012). *Primary Sources: America's Teachers on the Teaching Profession*. New York, NY: Scholastic and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.scholastic.com/primarysources/pdfs/Gates2012_full.pdf.
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- ^v Leithwood, K., Seashore Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004).
- ^{vi} New Leaders. (2017). "Leadership Changes Everything." *America Forward Evidence in Action Blog*. Retrieved from <http://www.americaforward.org/evidence-in-action-leadership-changes-everything/>.
- ^{vii} Reardon, S.F., & Hinze-Pifer, R. (2017). Test Score Growth Among Public School Students in Chicago, 2009-2014. Retrieved from Stanford Center for Education Policy Analysis: <https://cepa.stanford.edu/content/test-score-growth-among-chicago-public-school-students-2009-2014>.
- ^{viii} University Council for Educational Administration and New Leaders. (2016). *State Evaluation of Principal Preparation Programs Toolkit*. Retrieved from www.sepkit.org.