Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray,

We are writing to request that you include no less than $2.295 billion in funding for the Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants program (Title II, Part A) as part of the Fiscal Year 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. In addition, we request that you include $14.5 million in funding for the School Leader Recruitment and Support Program (SLRSP), which would fund the program at FY17 levels.

Title II, Part A provides flexible funding to states, districts and schools to strengthen teacher and school leader effectiveness and improve student outcomes, especially for children from low-income families and communities. The bipartisan Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization strengthened the program by providing new opportunities for states to use Title II, Part A funds to invest in principal leadership, job-embedded professional learning and leadership opportunities for teacher, and other evidence-based leadership strategies that will lead to improved student outcomes. Twenty-four states are taking advantage of the optional three percent set-aside in Title II, Part A to invest in school leadership. Funding Title II, Part A at no less than $2.295 billion will support momentum at the state level to use these dollars more effectively by encouraging states, districts, and schools to move forward with plans to invest in evidence-based, locally-driven strategies to strengthen school leadership.

The School Leader Recruitment and Support Program is the next iteration of the School Leadership Program, which has seeded principal training and support programs with a demonstrated track record of effectiveness. It is also the only federally authorized program specifically dedicated to strengthening school leadership. Through this program, aspiring principals gain access to high-quality preparation programs, sitting principals receive critical professional development supports and thousands of teachers—along with hundreds of thousands of students—have the opportunity to work and learn in schools where school leaders have the tools to help them maximize their potential. Recognizing the importance of school leaders, Congress included this important program in the bipartisan reauthorization of the ESEA. Funding SLRSP at $14.5 million will allow awards of new, competitive grants to support the recruitment, preparation, placement, support and retention of effective principals in high-need schools.

Support for SLRSP and Title II, Part A is essential because strong school leaders have an outsized effect on student achievement, dramatically improving the quality of teaching, creating positive school environments and raising student achievement in a school. Both programs can help develop a pipeline of skilled new principals and target experienced principals who are in...
their first year tackling the challenges of school turnaround and for whom strong support and high-quality professional learning are particularly critical. By leveraging new pathways to prepare and support outstanding educators to lead our schools, SLRSP and Title II, Part A-supported leadership strategies can amplify other investments in educator quality and lead to improved outcomes for teachers, students, and families.

These targeted federal investments can have a huge influence on locally-driven efforts to get well-prepared, well-supported principals into our highest-need schools. We urge you to include $14.5 million in funding for SLRSP, which would fund the program at FY17 levels, and no less than $2.295 billion in funding for Title II, Part A to help ensure that school leaders have access to the preparation and support that enable them to drive positive change for students and teachers.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Tammam Duckworth
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator
Doug Jones  
United States Senator

Robert Menendez  
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator

Tim Kaine  
United States Senator

Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator