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SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIALS
INTERNATIONAL



NATIONAL
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ESTABLISHED 1907



Senator Patrick Leahy
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Richard Shelby
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman, House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Kay Granger
Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

November 18, 2022

Dear Members of Congress,

As you work to complete the final FY2023 appropriations process, I submit this letter on behalf of the groups listed to urge you to prioritize investment in our nation's public schools in your annual spending decisions and to call your attention to the critical federal formula programs that are the backbone of our nation's educational system.

As the professional organizations representing the nation's public school superintendents, rural educators, education service agencies, and school business officials, we thank you for your leadership on COVID-19 investments, including the American Rescue Plan (ARP). As schools continue their important work of investing those dollars to best support student academic recovery and wellness, the annual work of annual appropriations remains a critical foundation for the very investments our nation's students and schools need most. Congress must act quickly; funding is frozen at last year's level and will remain there until Congress completes the annual appropriations work. Any further delay in concluding FY23 appropriations work will just exacerbate the difficulties for students, educators, administrators, and districts in providing educational supports and services.

We commend the House and Senate appropriations committees, as well as the President, for advancing budget proposals that include significant increases in education. We must be candid, however, that while the dollar amount represents an impressive year-over-year increase, when adjusted for inflation, the proposed funding levels merely bring federal education funding back in line with 2011 inflation-adjusted levels.

We know that the budget proposals introduced by the House, Senate, and President will not be the final version signed into law. We write to identify the proposed increases we think Congress should not only protect, but also prioritize. Increased federal education dollars targeted toward formula programs like Title I and IDEA are critical as schools work to address student recovery and support while also planning for how to sustain those critical supports when the one-time COVID money dries up. As such, we strongly support the prioritization of the following appropriations investments:

Title I Part A: *We support a \$1 billion increase* for Title I Part A, the backbone of the premier federal K-12 education law. The breadth and depth of Title I make it uniquely positioned for supporting districts in their work to support children—particularly those in poverty—in meeting challenging state academic content and achievement standards. Title I is a natural program for LEAs to look to and rely on as they transition away from ARP and work to braid together federal, state and local funding to sustain ARP investments.

IDEA Part B: Congress must act to preserve the American Rescue Plan IDEA funding levels as the new annual baseline. Congress has never honored its commitment to fund 40 percent of the additional cost associated with its mandate to educate students in special education. *We support an increase of \$2.5 billion in IDEA Part B* as a

step forward in preserving critical supports afforded through ARP and supporting students and districts in their efforts to educate students with disabilities.

School Nutrition: We support preserving the Keep Kids Fed Act (KKFA) meal reimbursement rates. The increased reimbursement rates have been critical for school food authorities and districts as they face increased costs for food, supplies, and labor. School food authorities (SFAs) are challenged with budgeting for these increased costs when prices are highly volatile and unpredictable; they are not allowed to operate “in the red” and will have to take money from their general operating funds to continue their meal programs. This creates an opportunity cost as those funds could have been used for other educational services. *We urge you to make permanent the temporary increased reimbursement rate for lunch and breakfast for SY22-23 under the KKFA.*

Emergency Connectivity Fund: The ECF was created as part of ARP and allows schools and libraries to provide students, teachers, and library patrons with devices and internet service at home. As of now, the FCC has committed more than \$6 billion in program funding provided by Congress to connect more than 14 million students and teachers, a significant step toward addressing the well-documented K-12 digital divide. A breakdown by state of ECF funding allocations is available [here](#), where you can see that nation-wide there are 7,158,442 Home internet connections, 11,454,375 Laptops and tablets and \$5,556,829,766 in ECF awards. *We support an appropriation of \$1 billion of funding to continue the ECF program.*

Rural Education Achievement Program: REAP is a cornerstone program for addressing the unique needs of our nation’s rural schools. *We support a \$20 million increase for REAP, bringing program funding to \$215 million.* We also support language calling for a briefing on alternative poverty data measurements and recommendations for improving poverty measurements for rural LEAs.

Education funding must remain a top priority for federal government funding in 2023, and we encourage you to advance a final FY2023 appropriations package that reflects our requests, above. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Noelle Ellerson Ng
Associate Executive Director, Advocacy & Governance
AASA, The School Superintendents Association

CC: House LHHS Appropriations Committee
Senate LHHS Appropriations Committee