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April 6, 2017

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Subcommittee Chairman
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Subcommittee Ranking Member
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations for Fiscal Years 2017-2018

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of our state associations and the 90,000 school board members who govern our country's 14,000 local school districts, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) urges your leadership and bipartisan support for swift passage of a final appropriations measure for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2017 that will maximize Prek-12 education investments in our nation's 50 million public school students. Likewise, we urge your leadership to enact a bipartisan measure for FY2018 that will help our public schools fulfill the goals of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and advance educational opportunities vital to student achievement. This federal support provided by Congress is critical as our school districts continue state and local efforts for ESSA implementation, address the special needs of students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), advance innovation and career-readiness through Perkins Career and Technical Education, expand high-quality early learning opportunities, and much more.

We appreciate your continued support for key investments in our students, school districts and communities. From Title I grants for disadvantaged students and special education to the Impact Aid program that is a principal source of support for our districts with federal installations within their boundaries, federal appropriations for education make a positive difference in the outcomes of our students and communities.

Special Education: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) investments are a top priority for school boards throughout the nation, as our districts work to address the needs of more than 6 million students with disabilities. Accordingly, we urge you to prioritize elementary and secondary appropriations for IDEA first. The investment proposed by the Administration for special education grants to states is to maintain funding at approximately \$12.72 billion. This proposal would equate to approximately 16 percent of what is historically considered the additional cost of educating students with disabilities, rather than the original promise of 40 percent of each state's excess cost of educating children with disabilities made in 1975 under the Education for All Handicapped Children Act.

Under this budget request, the average federal share of funding per student would be about \$1,777, according to the U.S. Department of Education. However, costs for most individualized education plans exceed this amount exponentially, especially for students affected by catastrophic cases. Because of these factors, we urge your consideration to prioritize IDEA investments for the remainder of FY2017 and in FY2018.

Title I Investments: We urge you to sustain investments in Title I grants for disadvantaged students, which help advance the range of choices that our public school districts offer to 90 percent of our nation's students, such as magnet schools, specialized curricula for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), public military academies and international focus schools. As a primary resource for providing the additional academic supports needed to more than 24 million students in our communities, Title I grants help close achievement gaps and equip our students with the knowledge and skills needed for success in college and the workforce. For example, program outcomes have indicated increased proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. Likewise, Title I investments have helped raise graduation rates and can be used to expand opportunities through dual or concurrent enrollment programs with institutions of higher education.

Impact Aid Payments for Federal Property: Along with the National Association of Federal Impacted Schools (NAFIS), we urge sustained appropriations for Impact Aid (Section 8002) federal properties payments. For Fiscal Year 2018, the Administration's budget request to Congress recommends the elimination of this \$66.8 million line item that provides funding to more than 200 school districts in 29 states as a replacement for the lost local revenue caused by the federal presence. Each of these school districts is unique, with eligible properties that include national parks, grasslands and laboratories, Army Corps of Engineering projects, and military academies. Each of these districts faces the same financial challenge: a loss of taxable property within their jurisdictions and, as a result, a loss of local revenue, but just as many students to educate. In some communities, the federal government is the largest landowner; and, many federal property school districts are small and in rural areas without the additional resources to address the shortfall in revenues for education.

Funding for Impact Aid payments for federal property must be maintained for the benefit of all students in these districts. Cuts would cause financial harm as Impact Aid supports essential needs such as

personnel and professional development, instructional materials, transportation, and technology - all critical to providing a well-rounded education for our students. Elimination of this funding stream would be a reversal on a 67-year commitment to federally impacted communities.

Teachers and School Leaders: The budget proposal would also eliminate roughly \$2.4 billion in investments for Title II of ESSA on "Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers, Principals, or Other School Leaders." Title II investments cover professional development, in-service training, technology integration into curricula, training on data usage to improve student achievement and student data privacy, implementation of performance-based compensation systems, parental/community engagement, development of STEM master teacher corps, civics, and more. Without federal-state-local partnerships to attract, retain and cultivate effective teachers and school leaders, student outcomes are impacted. This is an investment that we urge you to sustain.

Sequestration: As you consider these programmatic investments, we ask that you develop another Bipartisan Budget Agreement that avoids the across-the-board cuts to education and other programs that support our students. Legislating a permanent solution to the unintended consequences of the Budget Control Act of 2011 will help stabilize the budget and appropriations process, as well as establish priorities for our nation's domestic agenda including elementary and secondary education.

We look forward to working with you as you complete the work of a final appropriations measure for FY2017 and negotiate FY2018 priorities. Your leadership and bipartisan support for these investments critical to our school districts providing a well-rounded curriculum for our students that helps prepare them for success in life is very much appreciated by our school boards and their communities.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Gentzel
Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer