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May 2, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt
United States Senate
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
United States House of Representatives
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
United States House of Representatives
2467 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: *Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2019*

Dear Chairman Blunt, Chairman Cole, Ranking Member Murray and Ranking Member DeLauro:

The National School Boards Association (NSBA), working with and through our state associations to represent more than 90,000 local school board members, encourages you to make education funding a priority for fiscal year 2019. The nation's school board members represent an array of perspectives but are bound together by an unwavering commitment to promoting equity and excellence in public education. The nation's public schools bind our communities together and serve as a powerful democratic, economic, and cultural catalyst that continually propel the country forward. We must, however, do more to help schools deliver the resources, instruction, and opportunities that students need to achieve their full potential. Congress established the Elementary and Secondary Act in the 1960s to help level the educational playing field for low-income communities and half-a-century later, as school districts work to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), local, state and federal leaders need to redouble our efforts to ensure that every child has an opportunity to learn and thrive.

As the U.S. Department of Education completes the process of approving State's ESSA consolidated plans, local school boards are developing their own plans, as required by Sec. 1112, for implementing the law. This work includes shaping complex strategies for strengthening educator and school leader capacity, turning around low performing schools, targeting additional supports for low-performing subgroups, and ensuring all students are on a path toward success after graduation. Implementing these plans will involve significant local and state investments, but their success will also depend on a greater federal funding commitment. We applaud your efforts to boost education investments in fiscal year 2018 and encourage you to provide the maximum funding for the following programs in fiscal year 2019:

ESSA, Title I-A: Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged. Title I serves as a critical additional support for school districts serving low-income students. Our members welcome the incremental Title I funding increases that Congress provided in recent years. We urge you to continue to prioritize this flexible and important formula account to ensure that school districts have the resources required to provide the instructional and other additional learning supports struggling students need. Title I supplements an array of local investments, but also provides the additional supports that will be required to improve the comprehensive support, targeted support, and additional targeted support schools identified by State accountability systems, as required by ESSA.

ESSA, Title II-A: Preparing, Training and Recruiting High Quality Teachers, Principals and other School Leaders. Research clearly shows that teachers and school leaders have the biggest in-school impact on student outcomes. NSBA is disappointed by the Administration's efforts to eliminate Title II-A's investment in the nation's teachers and school leaders. More, not less, must be done to support the professionals working hard every day to make a lifelong difference for kids. Title II-A is a vital source of funding for educator professional development, recruitment, and retention. At a time when educator shortages - especially in Rural American, special education, early learning, and high-need subjects like mathematics and science, are hobbling some districts - we need a strong local, state, and federal partnership to build a world-class educator workforce. We need to show the nation's teachers that they are valued and not alone in trying to solve some of the most difficult social and economic challenges facing our communities. Title II-A funding has declined by hundreds of millions of dollars in recent years and we need Congress to reverse this trend.

ESSA, Title IV: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants. Congress used ESSA to consolidate and eliminate numerous programs, but established Title IV as a useful and flexible funding source that school districts could tailor to confront local challenges and promote locally-driven reforms. NSBA strongly supported creation of the program and its \$1.6 billion authorization level. The program's focus on promoting well-rounded educational opportunities, conditions for learning, and technology for learning provides a pathway for district leaders to launch and nurture needed programs for their students. We appreciate efforts to boost funding for this program in fiscal year 2018 and urge you to fund Title IV-A at the program's authorization level, so that this block grant can truly help school districts implement ESSA and support their high need students.

IDEA State Grants. NSBA's members are deeply committed to serving students with disabilities. Delivering on our commitment to educational equity includes meeting our responsibility to providing free and appropriate public education to students with disabilities. Congress has failed for decades, however, to help local communities shoulder the costs associated with meeting the needs of these students and their families. We urge federal leaders to revisit this issue and to significantly expand investments in the IDEA State Grants program, including putting the federal government on a reasonable path toward at least a 40% funding commitment. Meeting IDEAs law's requirements is consuming an ever-greater share of local budgets – at time when some states are limiting communities' abilities to collect revenue to support their schools – and we need the federal government to step-up to meet its IDEA obligations.

Capital Fund for School Safety Infrastructure. In the wake of increased school violence nationwide, NSBA urges Congress to invest in school safety measures by establishing a capital funding program that would provide grants, low interest loans and/or federally backed bonding

capacity that would allow schools districts to apply for or qualify for funds to equip schools across the nation with much needed infrastructure to guard against violent attacks including but not limited to: exterior and interior “one-way” door locks, bullet-proof glass, perimeter security fencing, alarm systems, security cameras, broadband connectivity to local law enforcement, modern safety and communications technology such as apps and other safety mechanisms that better protect our nation’s students. NSBA urges Congress to invest the maximum amount to help states and local governments better protect our nation’s students from violence.

Thank you for carefully considering NSBA’s recommendations. We appreciate your leadership on behalf of the nation’s students and stand ready to work with you to expand learning opportunities to the students that need our help to prepare success after graduation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas J. Gentzel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'T'.

Thomas J. Gentzel
Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer