

Written Testimony for the Record

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

Submitted by Noelle Ellerson Ng, Chief Advocacy & Governance Officer at AASA, The
School Superintendents Association

April 15, 2026

Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of AASA, The School Superintendents Association, representing more than 10,000 public school superintendents and system leaders across the country, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony for the record as you begin work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations bill.

We want to start by thanking Congress for its final FY26 allocations. In an otherwise austere budget year, and following budget proposals from the administration and this chamber that included deep cuts to education, we were pleased to see final FY26 funding levels that preserved and protected education investments. We urge the committee to continue to provide support for students, teachers and school leaders. Increased investment in education—particularly in formula programs—is a critical step to improving education for all students and bolstering student learning, academic achievement and college and career readiness among our high school graduates. We welcome the chance to work with you and Congress through the full FY27 budget and appropriations process.

School districts rely on a combination of local, state and federal policy and funding. Superintendents and the districts they lead find themselves navigating sustained fiscal pressure driven by rising special education costs, staffing shortages, transportation and construction expenses, and growing student needs—often with limited state and local flexibility. In this context of multiple policy and funding streams, stable, predictable investments in key federal programs like Title I, Part A (Title I) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are more important than ever. These programs form the backbone of federal support for public education and allow districts to plan responsibly, meet statutory obligations, and serve students equitably.

Protecting Core Formula Programs: AASA calls on your committee to protect and preserve funding for Title I and IDEA, two foundational programs that directly support students with the greatest needs. Title I remains the primary federal investment in closing opportunity gaps for students from low-income families. School districts rely on Title I funds to support evidence-based interventions, expanded learning time, instructional staff, and family engagement efforts. Any reduction or instability in Title I funding would disproportionately impact communities already facing significant economic and educational challenges.

IDEA is a federal law that operates as an unfunded mandate for schools. IDEA is not discretionary for school districts and comes with mandatory federal special education requirements. Districts must provide services regardless of whether federal funding keeps pace with costs. While Congress has made incremental progress in recent years, the federal government continues to fall far short of its long-standing commitment to fund 40 percent of the additional cost associated with educating students with special needs. The federal share for IDEA in FY26 is 10%, just one-quarter of the level Congress promised. Protecting IDEA funding—and avoiding proposals that merely shift or consolidate special education dollars—remains critical for districts as they continue to meet students’ individualized needs while maintaining fiscal stability.

Safeguarding Targeted Investments: In addition to Title I and IDEA, we urge the subcommittee to protect Title II, Part A (Title II), the Supporting Effective Instruction Grants; Title III, Part A (Title III), English Language Acquisition, and Title IV, Part A (Title IV), Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants.

- Title II is the only K-12 formula program dedicated to educator professional development. Research continues to find that teachers are the most important in-school factor contributing to students’ academic achievement. Title II provides critical funding to improve instruction and ensure students have greater access to high-quality, effective educators. Many school districts rely on Title II funding to grow the skills and expertise of current teachers in essential subjects like literacy, math and English or provide additional certification for teachers to expand learning opportunities for students. These investments also allow for districts to provide important induction and mentoring programs for new educators that keep them in the classroom. Eliminating Title II would eliminate many districts’ ability to improve instruction in their classrooms and address staff shortages through retention strategies.
- Title III is essential for school districts to ensure English learners have access to the resources they need to attain English language proficiency and meet the same challenging academic standards as their English-proficient peers. These supports are vital to make sure all students leave school ready to thrive and succeed in the rapidly changing landscape of the 21st century. Eliminating federal funding for K-12 English learners will make it harder for these students to learn English, graduate, pursue higher education, and access good-paying jobs—limiting their contributions to our workforce and economy.
- Title IV-A is one of the few federal programs that provides districts with flexible, locally driven funding to address well-rounded education, school safety and student health, and effective use of technology. Districts use Title IV-A to support mental health services, school climate initiatives, cybersecurity and data privacy protections, digital learning infrastructure, and access to advanced coursework. Eliminating or consolidating Title IV-A would reduce districts’ ability to respond to emerging challenges and would undermine locally informed decision-making at a time when flexibility is more important than ever.

Preserving Rural Access: AASA also calls on the subcommittee to protect and preserve the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP). REAP provides critical support to rural districts that often lack the staffing capacity and economies of scale available to larger systems. The flexibility offered through REAP enables rural schools to braid funding streams, sustain essential programs, and ensure students in geographically isolated communities are not left behind. For many rural districts, REAP funding is not supplemental, it is foundational. Any reduction or consolidation of REAP would have an outsized impact on small and rural communities already operating with limited resources.

Federal Dollars Are Targeted and Not Easily Backfilled: As documented in AASA’s [Federal Share of K–12 Education Funding](#), federal education dollars represent a relatively small share of overall K–12 funding nationally but are highly targeted to students and communities with the greatest needs, including low-income students, students with disabilities, and rural districts. These funds support services that districts are often legally required to provide or cannot sustain through state and local revenue alone. As a result, districts with higher concentrations of need rely more heavily on federal formula funding, and reductions or instability in these programs cannot be readily absorbed without direct impacts on staffing, instructional supports, and student services. For the year analyzed, the federal share in a district operating budget was 12.75%. The charts below identify those states with more than half their LEAs operating with budgets with an above average share of federal dollars:

States w/ More Than Half of LEAs Operating w/ Federal Share Greater than 12.75%		
AL	LA	SC
AK	MS	TN
AZ	MO	TX
AR	MT	VA
FL	NV	WV
GA	NM	WY
ID	NC	
KY	OK	

States w/ More Than Half of LEAs Operating w/ Federal Share Greater than 15%		
AL	ID	NM
AK	KY	NC
AZ	LA	OK
AR	MS	TN
FL	MO	WV
GA	MT	

As your committee begins its important work on FY27, we urge you to reject proposals that consolidate, eliminate, or destabilize education investment. K–12 formula programs like Title I, IDEA, Title II, Title III, Title IV-A, and REAP are proven investments that allow public schools to meet federal obligations, respond to local needs, and support student success.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony to the record.

Sincerely,

Noelle Ellerson Ng
 Chief Advocacy & Governance Officer