

April 19, 2023

Rep. Kay Granger
Chairwoman, House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Rep. Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the undersigned national education organizations, representing district leaders, educational service agencies, rural educators, and transportation providers, we write to express our deep concerns with the possibility of significant cuts to critical education funding within the federal fiscal year 2024 (FY24) appropriations process.

As the committee moves forward with the work of FY24, we strongly encourage the development of a bipartisan appropriations package that includes purposeful consideration of robust funding levels within the Labor, Health Human Services, Education appropriations bill. As education leaders who serve as stewards of public dollars, we are deeply familiar with the pressures you face when allocating limited public (federal) funding. Regardless of whether the cuts come in the form of rescinding obligated ESSER funding, establishing arbitrary spending caps or adopting retro-dated annual funding, we oppose all of these measures as they are neither thoughtful nor appropriate ways of reducing federal spending.

We understand the importance of fiscal restraint and responsibility and mindful accountability around debt and deficit. We do not support, however, conflating these conversations with the necessary duty of raising of America's debt ceiling and believe it should be lifted cleanly and immediately.

During the last major debt ceiling brinkmanship, Congress adopted the Bipartisan Budget Control Act of 2011, which established ten years of budget caps on K-12 education spending. The ensuing decade found Congress raising the cap for each of the subsequent ten years. Given the exponentially more partisan and political environment of today, the idea that budget caps would be more functional is unrealistic and short-sighted. Blunt budget caps are cuts that simply lock in lower funding, in this instance, for a one-year delay in preventing default. This is an unacceptable premise when we consider that the current U.S. Department of Education funding level—when adjusted for inflation—is below FY11 levels, meaning our nation's schools are currently doing more, for needier students, with less.

In response to the specific types of cuts to education rumored to be under consideration for FY24, we direct you to the [letter shared](#) by U.S. Education Secretary Miguel Cardona, addressed to this committee's Ranking Member DeLauro. Assuming a proposed FY24 cap at FY22 levels, and knowing it is reasonable to assume that defense would be shielded from the cuts, this would translate into an \$850 million dollar cut to Title I; an \$850 million cut to IDEA; and a \$35 million cut to ESSA Titles II-A and IV-A. Knowing that current funding levels—adjusted for inflation—are already below that of FY11, the idea of asking our nation's neediest students to absorb further cuts of this magnitude is mind-boggling. Knowing that the work to address learning recovery is ongoing in districts—both school and congressional—across the nation and of all political stripes, the use of blunt budget mechanisms to deny high quality educational opportunities to 50 million children across the United States is unnecessarily aggressive and short-sighted.

We are concerned that the current approach, while messaged as driven on fiscal restraint and responsibility, is closer to fiscal recklessness in terms of cutting first and asking questions later. We support the role of the Congress in having the tough conversations that come with an annual budget and appropriations process; we urge the full appropriations committee to engage in bipartisan, bicameral negotiations that respect the broad programs funded, and to ensure that final funding levels are tailored and reasonable, not blunt and careless.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please direct any questions to Noelle Ellerson Ng (nellerson@aasa.org).

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Association of Educational Service Agencies
National Association for Pupil Transportation
National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium
National Rural Education Association

CC: House Appropriations Committee