

Senator Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

March 22, 2018

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of AASA, The School Superintendents Association, representing 13,000 public school system leaders across the country, we write to express our strong support for H.R. 1625, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of FY18. The bill and its provisions to support investments in public education are a step in the right direction toward supporting efforts to ensure every parent and student has access to a high quality public school. We are optimistic that the level of funding provided in FY18 will be a baseline of support for our nation's public schools and the students they serve, and that future funding conversation will build on this critical investment.

We applaud the bill for its increased investments in critical federal education programs, including ESSA Title I, IDEA, Perkins Career and Technical Education, Impact Aid, 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Head start. The bill levels funds the ESSA Title II program, which is vital to supporting our schools' teachers, and we thank Congress for rejecting the administration's proposal to gut the program. While the bill does continue funding for the DC Opportunity Scholarship (VOUCHER) program, we commend Congress for using the FY18 funding bill to rebuke the administration's continued efforts to further advance their flawed privatization agenda.

Our nation's rural communities and schools—particularly those impacted by the presence of federal forested land—will deeply appreciate reauthorization and funding for the expired Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program. We thank you for including the long past-due reauthorization in the bill and for providing two years of funding to support the 9 million students in 4,400 school district in 775 forest counties in 41 states served by the SRS program.

The omnibus bill includes language related to other policy priorities AASA supports. We applaud the language to prohibit the use of federal funding for purchasing firearms or for firearm training for educators. We commend the inclusion of language that will allow the Center for Disease Control and Prevention to conduct gun violence prevention research. We support the language to strengthen the existing background check

requirements. These are small, but important, first steps in what must be a larger effort to more seriously address our nation's gun violence crisis, especially as we continue to experience school shootings.

We are disappointed the bill includes language that continues the prohibition on federal funds from being used for transportation to support public school racial integration. We are also disappointed to see that Congress failed to reach a permanent solution to DACA, including authorization of the DREAM Act. We look forward to working with Congress to eliminate the transportation provision in FY19, and will look for an expedient solution to resolve DACA.

Thank you for your leadership in bringing the FY18 appropriations process to a close. Though the final product is nearly six months past due, we acknowledge that this bill demonstrates an affirmation of the importance of investment in our nation's public schools. We urge you to vote YES for the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Noelle Ellerson Ng". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Noelle Ellerson Ng

Associate Executive Director