



June 23, 2015

Dear Appropriations Committee Member:

On behalf AASA, The School Superintendents Association, the Association of Educational Service Agencies, the National Rural Education Association, and the National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition, I write to express our strong and unified opposition to the Fiscal Year 2016 Labor-Health-Human Services-Education (LHHS) Appropriations bill as reported from subcommittee on June 16.

Collectively, our groups represent superintendents, school system leaders, educational service agency leaders, and rural educators, including parents, teachers and administrators. We cannot support a bill like this one, based on sequester level caps, essentially freezing funding for non-defense discretionary programs, which include critical education funding. This bill eliminates 27 education programs, cuts funding to 10, increases funding for 21 programs, and freezes funding for 29 programs. In total, funding for K12 programs are cuts by \$2.03 billion, an amount uncomfortably close to the deep cuts of sequester.

We would normally applaud and welcome the proposed \$502 million increase for IDEA (among others) as critical and well past-due. In the context of broader cuts and freezes that run deeper than any IDEA increase can cover, though, this is an appropriations bill focused on cutting funding to our nation's schools and disinvesting in the future. We understand the importance of fiscal responsibility and have meaningfully engaged in conversations around spending cuts, restraint, revenues and more. There are two sides to responsibility, though, and cuts of this magnitude are deliberate and irresponsible.

It is imperative that Congress work collaboratively to identify a blend of revenue increases, spending cuts and mandatory program reform to replace sequester. Our groups have actively advocated against—and demonstrated the deep, damaging cuts stemming from—sequestration and its impact on our nation's public schools, impacts which are only amplified by the cuts in this appropriations bill.

The cuts within this bill harm our nation's global competitiveness and economic future by completely undermining progress on improving student achievement, closing achievement gaps and increasing high school graduation and post-secondary education attendance.

We urge you to VOTE NO on the FY16 LHHS Appropriations bill and to support negotiations that raise the caps on NDD spending so that LHHS programs can receive funding increases that invest in our nation's schools and students, rather than undermining their future.

Sincerely

Noelle M. Ellerson
Legislative Liaison