

The Honorable Thad Cochran
United States Senate
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
United States Senate
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
United States Senate
Chairman
Subcommittee of Labor, HHS, Education and
Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
Ranking Member
Subcommittee of Labor, HHS, Education and
Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

June 7, 2017

Dear Senators Cochran, Leahy, Blunt, and Murray:

The undersigned organizations on behalf of the Title IV, A Coalition write to request that the Committee provide full funding for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grant program, found under Title IV, Part A of the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

The SSAE grant program, authorized at \$1.6 billion for fiscal year 2018 (FY 2018), is the result of Congress' decision to consolidate more than 20 existing programs, most of which were competitive, into a single formula-funded flexible block grant program that has the potential to benefit millions of students by allowing districts to choose how to spend their dollars to support safe and healthy schools, well-rounded education, and the effective use of technology. The critical education programs meant to be supported by SSAE funds include: 1) safe and healthy students activities, such as providing mental health services to students; 2) increasing student access to STEM, computer science and accelerated learning courses, physical education, the arts, music, foreign languages, and college and career counseling; funds for an effective school library program; and, 3) providing students with access to technology and digital materials and educators with technology professional development opportunities.

We strongly urge Congress to fully fund the SSAE program in FY 2018, as the FY 2017 allocation of only \$400 million is wholly inadequate to provide the flexibility at the local level or to run the program as Congress intended. Funding this program at less than 25% of its authorized level in its first year has already presented serious implementation issues, including the need to allow states to allocate funds to districts competitively, contrary to what is authorized in ESSA. States electing to run a competition will incur significant burdens as they grapple with creating, initiating, and judging a competition. Altering the structure of the program in this manner also negates the Congressional intent of increasing access to SSAE programs for all students and instead is likely to continue to benefit those districts already adept at winning competitive grants.

As a result of the low funding and the confusion around a competition, we are deeply concerned that many states might ignore the competitive option altogether and choose to allocate the money by formula for the sake of ease and fairness to all districts. While our groups ultimately want these dollars to go to every district, electing to distribute the money by formula at this low funding level has its own potentially negative consequences. For instance, many states or districts might choose to simply transfer the dollars for another purpose, as the amounts received by formula may simply not be enough to make meaningful investments in these areas, thereby leaving districts with no federal funds to support Title IVA's abovementioned activities.

In addition to the financial challenges of such a low funding level, the amount allocated for SSAE does not allow states and districts to make meaningful investments in a range of programs that, when combined, improve conditions for learning and help students receive a well-rounded education. It will force school districts to choose between high- quality programs that positively impact students in different ways – trading off school counseling services for Advanced Placement programs, for instance, thereby jeopardizing the greater flexibility for districts and schools that Congress intended.

On behalf of the millions of students, parents and educators that we collectively represent, we urge you to please appropriate full funding in FY 2018 for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant program under Title IV, A of ESSA and allow states and districts to make meaningful investments in programs that are critical to student success.

Sincerely,

National Organizations:

AASA, The School Superintendents Association	National
Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK)	National
Advance CTE	National
AESA	National
Alliance for Excellent Education	National
American Association of School Librarians	National
American Council for School Social Work	National
American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages	National
American Counseling Association	National
American Dance Therapy Association	National
American Federation of School Administrators	National
American Heart Association	National
American Music Therapy Association	National
American School Counselor Association	National
ASCD	National
Association of School Business Officials	National
Blackboard Inc	National

Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools	National
Cengage Learning	National
Coalition for Community Schools	National
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)	National
College in High School Alliance	National
Committee for Children	National
Communities In Schools	National
CoSN	National
Council of Administrators of Special Education	National
Edgenuity	National
Futures Without Violence	National
In Reach, Inc.	National
International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)	National
Jobs for the Future	National
Learning Disabilities Association of America	National
National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships	National
National Association for College Admission Counseling	National
National Association for Music Education (NAfME)	National
National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)	National
National Association of School Nurses	National
National Association of School Psychologists	National
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)	National
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)	National
National Center for Learning Disabilities	National
National Center for Technological Literacy at the Museum of Science, Boston	National
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics	National
National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Assoc. (NIAAA)	National
National PTA	National
National Rural Education Association	National
National Science Teachers Association	National
National Summer Learning Association	National
Noodle Markets	National
Organization of American Kodály Educators	National
Organization of American Kodály Educators	National
Recording Academy	National
Safe Routes to School National Partnership	National

School Social Work Association of America	National
SETDA	National
SHAPE America - Society of Health and Physical Educators	National
Society for Public Health Education	National
Software & Information Industry Association	National
STEM Education Coalition	National
STEM LA3–Girls Collaborative Project	National
Students4STEM	National
Trust for America's Health	National
Girl Scouts of the USA	National
Music for All, Inc.	National
International ACAC	National / International
MACUL	National & Michigan

State Organizations:

Alabama Educational Technology Association (AETA - ISTE Affiliate)	Alabama
Pacific Northwest Association of College Admission Counseling (PNACAC)	Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, & Washington
Arizona Association of School Psychologists	Arizona
CocoNuts FIRST Robotics Team	Arizona
RMACAC	Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming
California Association of School Psychologists (CASP)	California
California Educational Technology Professionals Association	California
San Diego Association of School Psychologists	California
The Joyful Child Foundation	California
Winters Joint Unified School District	California
CUE	California, Nevada
Western Association of College Admission Counseling	California, Nevada
Canon City School District Fremont RE-1	Colorado
Colorado Society of School Psychologists	Colorado
Garfield County School District 16	Colorado
Innovative Education Colorado (InnEdCO) (ISTE)	Colorado
Pikes Peak BOCES	Colorado

Delaware Association of School Psychologists (DASP)	Delaware
Florida Association of School Psychologists	Florida
Georgia Library Media Association	Georgia
Georgia K-12 CTO Chapter of CoSN	Georgia
Illinois Association for College Admission Counseling	Illinois
Illinois School Psychologist Association	Illinois
Westfield Washington Schools	IN
Indiana Connected Educators	Indiana
Kentucky Association for Psychology in the Schools	Kentucky
LACUE (ISTE Affiliate)	Louisiana
Louisiana Association of Computer Using Educators	Louisiana
Kent County Public Schools	Maryland
Maryland Society for Educational Technology (MSEA)	Maryland
Team 449 The Blair Robot Project	Maryland
MassMEA	Massachusetts
Bionic Blackhawks - Team 2834	Michigan
Michigan Association for College Admission Counseling	Michigan
Michigan Music Education Association	Michigan
Missouri Association of School Psychologists	Missouri
Montana Educational Technologists Association	Montana
JML Strategy–Montana Afterschool Alliance	Montana
Montana Education Partnership	Montana
Nebraska School Psychologists Association	Nebraska
Nevada Association of School Psychologists (NVASP)	Nevada
New England Association of College Admissions Counselors	New England
New Hampshire Music Educators Association	New Hampshire
New Hampshire Society for Technology in Education (NHSTE)	New Hampshire
NHCTO Council	New Hampshire
School Administrative Unit #6	New Hampshire
FIRST Robotics Team 1676 - The Pascack Pi-oneers	New Jersey
New Jersey Association of School Psychologists	New Jersey
NJMEA	New Jersey
Albuquerque Public Schools	New Mexico
Explora	New Mexico
FIRST Team 1511 - Rolling Thunder	New York
New York State Association for Computers and Technologies in Education	New York

(NYSCATE)

New York State School Music Association	New York
New York State Association for College Admission Counseling	New York State
FIRST Team 2655, Inc., The Flying Platypi	North Carolina
North Carolina CoSN	North Carolina
North Dakota Music Educator's Association	North Dakota
FRC 3324 Metrobots	Ohio
Ohio Music Education Association	Ohio
Salem Keizer Education Foundation	Oregon
Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania
Marine Advanced Technology Education (MATE) PA	Pennsylvania
Parkland School District	Pennsylvania
Progressive Music	Pennsylvania
PAECT	Pennsylvania
Southern Association for College Admission Counseling (SACAC)	Regional
RISTE	Rhode Island
South Dakota Music Education Association	South Dakota
The Fitting Room Educational Media Corporation	State
TETA - Tennessee Educational Technology Association	Tennessee
Texas K-12 CTO Council	Texas
Virginia Society for Technology in Education (VSTE)	Virginia
Washington Music Educators Association	Washington
FIRST Wisconsin	Wisconsin
Washington Music Educators Association (WMEA)	Wisconsin
WEMTA Wisconsin Educational Media & Technology Association	Wisconsin
Wisconsin Educational Technology Leaders (CoSN)	Wisconsin
Wisconsin Music Educators Association	Wisconsin
Wyoming School Psychology Association	Wyoming