COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION FUNDING

July 15, 2013

Dear Representative:

The Committee for Education Funding (CEF), a coalition of 112 national education associations and institutions representing birth to postgraduate education, writes to express our strong opposition to the authorization levels contained in HR 5, the Student Success Act. While CEF as a coalition is not taking a position on the policy issues in HR 5, **we strongly oppose the authorization levels because they lock in the sequester cuts to programs authorized in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) through the 2019-2020 school year.**

HR 5 sets the aggregate ESEA authorization level for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 and for each of the succeeding years at the aggregate FY 2013 post-sequester funding level of $22.85 billion. Doing so locks in almost $1.3 billion in cuts to these programs compared to the FY 12 level of $24.11 billion (a cut of 5.21 percent). Indeed, by locking in the sequester levels as the authorization levels through FY 19, this bill, should it become law, would prevent the Congress from increasing funding for ESEA programs even if the sequester were replaced or revised at any time in the next six years.

As an example, the authorization levels for Impact Aid are exactly at the post-sequester funding levels. Thus, should HR 5 become law, the Congress would not be able restore the damaging sequester cut affecting children of military families and those on Indian reservations nor provide any increase for Impact Aid through 2019.

ESEA programs have already been cut multiple times in the past two and a half years. The FY 2011 CR cut ESEA programs by an aggregate $1.43 billion with 17 programs eliminated. The FY 2012 omnibus appropriations bill cut ESEA funding by another $99 million.

The final FY 2013 level, after both a 0.2 percent across-the board cut and then the 5 percent sequester cuts, slashed another $1.26 billion from ESEA programs. These waves of cuts have come at a time when enrollments have increased, more children are living in poverty and schools and students have endured deep state and local budget cuts.

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Enough is enough! It's time for Congress to reject these draconian cuts and replace the sequester with a balanced package of deficit reduction. Solving our nation's fiscal situation and reducing the debt can't and won't happen simply by slashing education.

The House last month passed the National Defense Authorization Act that sets its authorization levels at the pre-sequester level. Shouldn't the ESEA reauthorization also propose to restore the harmful sequester cuts? Isn't an educated citizenry as important to our nation's future as a robust defense department?

Instead of making it more difficult to improve overall student achievement, close achievement gaps, and increase high school graduation and college access rates by locking in these drastic cuts, Congress should be investing in our future through education. The need to increase the federal investment in education has never been greater. Jobs and the economy are directly linked to such investments. Both unemployment rates and lifetime earnings are based on levels of education attainment.

In addition, the American public is strongly opposed to cutting federal support for education:

- A national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press found that cuts in federal education spending are particularly unpopular. Only 10 percent of the public supports decreasing funding for education programs, while 60 percent wants to increase spending.
- A Bloomberg News poll found that 67 percent of the public believes education funding should not be cut at all by the sequester.
- A CEF/Foundation for Education Investment poll in December 2012 also found that two-thirds of the public supported protecting education from the sequester cuts and 86 percent agreed that education investments are important to our future economic growth.

We urge you to reject the authorization levels contained in HR 5.

Sincerely,

Myrna R Mandlawitz　　　Joel Packer

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President　　　Executive Director