



November 24, 2014

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
H-305 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-128 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-146A Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

On behalf of National PTA's more than four million members, I write to urge you to **finalize an omnibus appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2015 (FY2015)** that promotes child achievement and well-being **by providing for needed investments in education and protecting the current nutrition standards of school meals.**

Education Funding

Federal investment in quality education is critical to our nation's long-term success. However, education funding, though only two percent of the federal budget, has been the target of dramatic cuts since January 2011. While the FY2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act reversed a majority of the sequester cuts, it only restored two-thirds of the cuts in the US Department of Education. Overall funding at the Department of Education, excluding Pell grants, is still below the FY2008 level.

Therefore, PTA supports **an omnibus appropriations bill that contains the targeted funding increases for education contained in the bill approved by the Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee or proposed in the House Labor-HHS-Education bill released by Representative Rosa DeLauro in September.** We believe that an omnibus appropriations bill would reflect the important work done by your committees and honor the bipartisan budget agreement reached by the House and Senate in 2013. In contrast, a Continuing Resolution (CR) would abdicate Congress's responsibility to make program-by-program funding decisions and to provide necessary guidance to the Administration in program implementation for FY2015. We urge you to choose the funding solution that is best for our children and most responsible in the long-term by passing an



appropriations bill that provides necessary increases to education and funds these programs through the remainder of this fiscal year.

Child Nutrition

PTA also urges you **to reject any proposal to scale back nutrition standards for school meals in the FY2015 Appropriations process**, including waivers to opt-out of select nutrition guidelines. It is our belief that any necessary adjustments to the program should be done by working directly with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the authority that has already been granted to them by Congress, or be debated openly through reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act, due to be reauthorized next year. **Children and families are best served when these programs' nutrition guidelines are not dictated through the appropriations process.**

Our nation's schools have been very successful over the last few years in providing a healthier school environment for our children: The USDA reports that 90 percent of schools nationwide are meeting the updated nutrition standards. Scaling back nutrition standards could unnecessarily reverse the health improvements already made by the schools across the country.

PTA has a longstanding history of supporting policies that provide for school-based meals that are healthy and nutritious. We are committed to working with families, students, schools, Congress and the USDA to ensure the nation's child nutrition programs are accessible, nutritious and successful. We ask that you therefore oppose the inclusion of provisions that impede the progress made through these integral nutrition programs in any FY2015 appropriations bill.

National PTA thanks you for your consideration of these requests and looks forward to working with you to ensure that the federal government provides investments that further the long-term success of children. If we can be of assistance please contact Jessica Seitz, Education Policy Analyst, at jseitz@pta.org or (703) 518-1249.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Otha E. Thornton Jr." in black ink.

Otha E. Thornton, Jr.
President
National PTA

CC: Members, House and Senate Appropriations Committee