November 22, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray  The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services and Education
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
& Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services and Education
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
& Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

$17 Million for Statewide Family Engagement Centers

Dear Chair Murray, Ranking Member Blunt, Chair DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

The 86 undersigned national and state organizations write in support of robust funding
for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFEC) grant program and respectfully
request no less than $17 million in funding for the program for FY 2022. $17 million
matches the level proposed in the Senate Democrat FY 2022 Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies (L-HHS-ED) appropriations bill.

This year parents, guardians, educators and school leaders have continued to endure
pandemic-related challenges of online, hybrid, and altered in-person instruction. New
challenges have arisen in engaging families at a time when families are primary to
student success. High-impact family engagement, as supported by the SFEC program, is
critical to ensuring that students are not suffering from learning loss, particularly those
whose families and communities – many of whom already faced significant
disadvantages before the COVID-19 pandemic – have been most impacted by the
pandemic.

The SFEC program provides much-needed technical assistance and partnership
development to states and school districts to foster meaningful engagement with
families to further their children's academic and developmental progress. While SFECs
work with all parents and schools throughout their state, many focus on students of
color, English learners, and recent immigrant children working to integrate into their new
communities. Additionally, SFECs provide direct services to families to give them the tools to effectively work with their child’s school to improve their child’s academic outcomes and overall well-being.

Research shows that family engagement advances the academic and developmental progress of our nation’s children and drives increases in student achievement. The success of SFECs has been well documented, and they have served as vital resources for families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our organizations believe that an investment in SFECs is critical to ensuring that families are meaningfully supported and engaged in their child’s education so they can support our nation’s students in becoming fully prepared for higher education and careers.

The funding Congress allocated to the SFEC Program in FY21 was only enough to support family engagement in 13 states: Arizona, Connecticut, Hawaii, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, and West Virginia. Although the American Rescue Plan Act provided emergency funds for K-12 education to cover pandemic-related expenses, it did not include funding dedicated to Statewide Family Engagement Centers. Robust funding is still needed to not only sustain the great work already underway, but also to expand the program to ensure that all families across the country – including families in your state – have access to this program in the coming years.

Historically family engagement has always been, and will continue to be, a strong bipartisan issue. Leaders of recent Dear Colleague letters supporting robust funding for the SFEC program include Representative Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA), Representative Glenn ‘GT’ Thompson (R-PA), Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) and Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC). Several colleagues from both sides of the aisle have continuously affirmed their support for an increase of funding for SFECs on the behalf of their constituents. More than ever, National PTA outlined the need for such dedicated funding in April 2020. See “National PTA calls on Congress to provide funding for family engagement, remote learning, special education and child nutrition programs in the next COVID-19 relief bill.” http://bit.ly/Apr2020COVIDLetterPTA.

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continued bipartisan support for the program is needed to help reverse the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthen family engagement in schools.

For the reasons above, we respectfully request $17 million in funding for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers grant program in the FY 2022 L-HHS-ED appropriations bill, a desperately needed increase from the $12.5 million allocated to the program in FY21. Thank you again for your consideration of our request, and we look forward to working with you to support this important program.

Sincerely,

Afterschool Alliance
Alabama PTA
Alabama Parent Education Center
ARC in Action
Arizona PTA
Carolina Family Engagement Center
Chester County School District
Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities
Colorado PTA
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Communities In Schools of South Carolina - Midlands
Delaware PTA
East Middle School PTA
EDGE Consulting Partners
Federation for Children with Special Needs
Fiesta Educativa, Inc.
Florida PTA
Formed Families Forward
Illinois PTA
INCLUDEnyc
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Learning Heroes
Louisiana PTA
Maine Parent Teacher Association
Minnesota PTA
Mississippi PTA
Missouri PTA
MT State PTA
NAESP
National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
National Center for Families Learning
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Center for Parent Leadership, Advocacy, and Community Empowerment (National PLACE)
National Council for Community and Education Partnerships
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Military Family Association
National Organization for Women
National PTA
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Nevada PTA
New Jersey PTA
New Mexico PTA
New York State Parent Teacher Association
North Carolina PTA
North Dakota PTA
Oklahoma PTA
Oregon PTA
PACER Center
Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC)
Parent Information Center of Delaware
Parent Revolution
Parents as Teachers
Parents Helping Parents Inc.
Pathfinder Services of ND -State PTI
PEAK Parent Center
Pennsylvania PTA
Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence
PTI Nebraska
PUERTO RICO PTA
Research, Evaluation, and Measurement Center, University of South Carolina
Rhode Island PTA
RI Parent Information Network
SC Center for Fathers and Families
SchoolHouse Connection
South Carolina PTA
South Carolina School Improvement Council