SENATE DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER
Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) and Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC) are leading the bipartisan Dear Colleague letter to fund Statewide Family Engagement Centers in FY21. Please Carter Thompson at Carter_Thompson@coons.senate.gov or Andrew Nam in Senator Tillis’ office at Andrew_Nam@tillis.senate.gov to sign on by COB March 17.

XXXX, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education & Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education & Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you develop the Fiscal Year 2021 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, we respectfully request that you provide $15 million in funding for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFEC).

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. SFECs also provide vital direct services to improve collaboration of engagement between children, parents, teachers, school leaders, counselors, administrators and other school personnel with each other.

The SFEC program embarked on the inaugural year of an initial five-year grant cycle after receiving $10 million in the FY18 appropriations process, resulting in thirteen states establishing SFECs. While we were pleased to see that the program received $10 million in both FY19 and FY20, no new centers can be established without additional funding. This means 41.7 million K-12 students and their families in the other states are unable to benefit from enhanced engagement supports and services provided by SFECs unless Congress provides more funding. We believe that an investment in SFECs and family engagement is important to ensuring not only that families are meaningfully supported and engaged in the education of their children, but that our nation’s students are fully prepared for higher education, the workforce, and career opportunities in the 21st century.

Research has shown that family engagement in a child’s education increases student achievement, improves attendance, reduces the dropout rate, and advances the emotional and physical well-being of children. Students whose families are involved in their children’s academic success attend school more regularly, earn better grades, enroll in more challenging academic programs, and have higher graduation rates. The SFEC program will harness effective practices to help schools and districts implement systematic family engagement programs that build ties between the community, families, students, and schools.
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Thank you for your consideration of our request. We look forward to working with you to support this important program.

Sincerely,

____________________________________  ______________________________________
Christopher A. Coons  Thom Tillis
United States Senator  United States Senator

____________________________________  ______________________________________
Jack Reed  Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator  United States Senator

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United States Senator  United States Senator