



Written Testimony for the Record

On behalf of

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Before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health  
and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies

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National PTA and the PACER Center would like to thank the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (L-HHS-ED) for soliciting the views and recommendations of public witnesses on FY2018 for the record. National PTA and the PACER Center, two of the nation's leading family engagement organizations, respectfully request that the House L-HHS-ED Appropriations Subcommittee support robust investments in public education and family engagement programs. National PTA is the oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy association in the United States with 4 million PTA members working to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. Since 1977, PACER Center, a nationwide parent engagement center, has enhanced the quality of life and expanded opportunities for children, youth and young adults by ensuring that families have the tools to help their children succeed in school and life. Specifically, our organizations request \$10 million in the FY2018 U.S. Department of Education budget for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs) grant program to prepare all students for the 21st century workforce and help grow our economy.

Our organizations support high-quality public education that ensures families are engaged in their child's education. More than 40 years of research shows—regardless of a family's income or socioeconomic background—students with engaged families attend school more regularly, earn better grades, enroll in advanced-level programs and

have higher graduation rates.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, teachers are more likely to remain in schools where families are involved and where they develop trusting relationships.<sup>2</sup> Both the House of Representatives and the Senate recognized the importance of parent and family engagement in education by including the SFECs program in their respective reauthorization bills. In fact, the SFECs program is one of the few non-categorical programs from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) that was maintained in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

The SFECs grant program will build capacity for states and school districts to systematically embed family engagement policies and practices in their education plans. The program will provide much needed professional development for educators and school leaders to strengthen school-family partnerships and parent-teacher relationships. Additionally, SFECs will 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.

With ESSA implementation underway, states, school districts, school leaders and parents need the resources that can be provided by SFECs to engage parents as stakeholders and effectively implement the law as Congress intended. Our

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<sup>1</sup> Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement. Annual Synthesis 2002. National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools. Retrieved from <https://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Allensworth, E, S. Ponisciak, and C. Mazzeo. (2009). The Schools Teachers Leave: Teacher Mobility in Chicago Public Schools. Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute. Retrieved from [https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/CCSR\\_Teacher\\_Mobility.pdf](https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/CCSR_Teacher_Mobility.pdf).

organizations are aware of the fiscal pressure being placed on non-defense discretionary spending, which is why we view our request of \$10 million for SFECs as reasonable in comparison to the \$39.3 million that the former Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) received in FY2010. Therefore, National PTA and PACER Center urge the L-HHS-ED Subcommittee to pass an FY 2018 L-HHS-ED appropriations bill that includes \$10 million for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers program. A modest investment of \$10 million will immensely help states and school districts to better support schools and educators in implementing effective family engagement to increase student achievement and foster greater school improvement efforts.