

The Honorable Thad Cochran
United States Senate
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
United States Senate
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
United States Senate
Chairman
Subcommittee of Labor, HHS, Education and
Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
Ranking Member
Subcommittee of Labor, HHS, Education and
Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

June 19, 2017

Dear Senators Cochran, Leahy, Blunt, and Murray:

The undersigned organizations on behalf of the Title IV, A Coalition write to request that the Committee provide full funding for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grant program, found under Title IV, Part A of the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

The SSAE grant program, authorized at \$1.6 billion for fiscal year 2018 (FY 2018), is the result of Congress' decision to consolidate more than 20 existing programs, most of which were competitive, into a single formula-funded flexible block grant program that has the potential to benefit millions of students by allowing districts to choose how to spend their dollars to support safe and healthy schools, well-rounded education, and the effective use of technology. The critical education programs meant to be supported by SSAE funds include: 1) safe and healthy students activities, such as providing mental health services to students; 2) increasing student access to STEM, computer science and accelerated learning courses, physical education, the arts, music, foreign languages, and college and career counseling; funds for an effective school library program; and, 3) providing students with access to technology and digital materials and educators with technology professional development opportunities.

We strongly urge Congress to fully fund the SSAE program in FY 2018, as the FY 2017 allocation of only \$400 million is wholly inadequate to provide the flexibility at the local level or to run the program as Congress intended. Funding this program at less than 25% of its authorized level in its first year has already presented serious implementation issues, including the need to allow states to allocate funds to districts competitively, contrary to what is authorized in ESSA. States electing to run a competition will incur significant burdens as they grapple with creating, initiating, and judging a competition. Altering the structure of the program in this manner also negates the Congressional intent of increasing access to SSAE programs for all students and instead is likely to continue to benefit those districts already adept at winning competitive grants.

As a result of the low funding and the confusion around a competition, we are deeply concerned that many states might ignore the competitive option altogether and choose to allocate the money by formula for the sake of ease and fairness to all districts. While our groups ultimately want these dollars to go to every district, electing to distribute the money by formula at this low funding level has its own potentially negative consequences. For instance, many states or districts might choose to simply transfer the dollars for another purpose, as the amounts received by formula may simply not be enough to make meaningful investments in these areas, thereby leaving districts with no federal funds to support Title IVA's abovementioned activities.

In addition to the financial challenges of such a low funding level, the amount allocated for SSAE does not allow states and districts to make meaningful investments in a range of programs that, when combined, improve conditions for learning and help students receive a well-rounded education. It will force school districts to choose between high- quality programs that positively impact students in different ways – trading off school counseling services for Advanced Placement programs, for instance, thereby jeopardizing the greater flexibility for districts and schools that Congress intended.

On behalf of the millions of students, parents and educators that we collectively represent, we urge you to please appropriate full funding in FY 2018 for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant program under Title IV, A of ESSA and allow states and districts to make meaningful investments in programs that are critical to student success.

Sincerely,

National Organizations and Companies

AASA, The School Superintendents Association

Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK)

Advance CTE

AESA

Alliance for Excellent Education

American Association of School Librarians

American Council for School Social Work

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

American Counseling Association

American Dance Therapy Association

American Federation of School Administrators

American Heart Association

American Library Association

American Music Therapy Association

American Occupational Therapy Association

American School Counselor Association

Apple

ASCD
Association of School Business Officials
Blackboard Inc.
Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools
Cengage Learning
Chorus America
Coalition for Community Schools
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
College in High School Alliance
Committee for Children
Communities In Schools
CoSN
Council of Administrators of Special Education
D2L
Edgenuity
Facebook
Futures Without Violence
Girl Scouts of the USA
Google
In Reach, Inc.
Intel
International ACAC
International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)
Jobs for the Future
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Little Kids Rock
Matific USA
McGraw-Hill Education
Music for All, Inc.
Music Teachers National Association
MusicFirst
NAMM
National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association for Music Education (NAfME)
National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)

National Association of School Nurses
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASPP)
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Center for Technological Literacy at the Museum of Science, Boston
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Assoc. (NIAAA)
National PTA
National Rural Education Association
National Science Teachers Association
National Summer Learning Association
National Summer Learning Association
Noodle Markets
Organization of American Kodály Educators
Organization of American Kodály Educators
Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia Fraternity of America
Quadrant Research
Recording Academy
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
School Social Work Association of America
SETDA
SHAPE America - Society of Health and Physical Educators
Society for Public Health Education
Software & Information Industry Association
STEM Education Coalition
STEM LA3–Girls Collaborative Project
Students4STEM
The Fitting Room Educational Media Corporation
Trust for America's Health
VH1 Save The Music Foundation

Regional Organizations

Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, & Washington

Pacific Northwest Association of College Admission Counseling (PNACAC)

Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming

RMACAC

California, Nevada

CUE

Western Association of College Admission Counseling

New England

New England Association of College Admissions Counselors

Southern

Southern Association for College Admission Counseling (SACAC)

State Organizations

Alabama

Alabama Educational Technology Association (AETA - ISTE Affiliate)

Arizona

Arizona Association of School Psychologists

CocoNuts FIRST Robotics Team

California

CA Association of School Psychologists (CASP)

California Association of School Psychologists

California Association of School Psychologists

California Educational Technology Professionals Association

San Diego Association of School Psychologists

The Joyful Child Foundation

The Joyful Child Foundation

Winters Joint Unified School District

Colorado

Canon City School District Fremont RE-1

Colorado Society of School Psychologists

Garfield County School District 16

Innovative Education Colorado (InnEdCO) (ISTE)

Pikes Peak BOCES

Connecticut

Connecticut Music Educators Association

Delaware

Delaware Association of School Psychologists (DASP)

Florida

Florida Association of School Psychologists

Georgia

Georgia Library Media Association

Georgia K-12 CTO Chapter of CoSN

Hawaii

Hawaii Music Educators Association

Illinois

Illinois Association for College Admission Counseling

Illinois Music Education Association

Illinois School Psychologist Association

Indiana

Indiana Connected Educators

Westfield Washington Schools

Kentucky

Kentucky Association for Psychology in the Schools

Kentucky Music Educators Association

Louisiana

LACUE (ISTE Affiliate)

Louisiana Association of Computer Using Educators

Maine

Maine Music Educators Association

Maryland

Kent County Public Schools

Maryland Society for Educational Technology (MSEA)

Team 449 The Blair Robot Project

Massachusetts

Massachusetts Music Educators Association (MMEA)

Michigan

Bionic Blackhawks - Team 2834

MACUL

Michigan Association for College Admission Counseling

Michigan Music Education Association

Mississippi

Mississippi Foreign Language Association

Missouri

Missouri Association of School Psychologists

Montana

Montana Educational Technologists Association

JML Strategy–Montana Afterschool Alliance

Montana Education Partnership

Nebraska

Nebraska School Psychologists Association

Nevada

Nevada Association of School Psychologists (NVASP)

New Hampshire

New Hampshire Music Educators Association

New Hampshire Society for Technology in Education (NHSTE)

NHCTO Council

School Administrative Unit #6

New Jersey

FIRST Robotics Team 1676 - The Pascack Pi-oneers

New Jersey Association of School Psychologists

New Jersey Music Educators Association (NJMEA)

New Mexico

Albuquerque Public Schools

Explora

New York

FIRST Team 1511 - Rolling Thunder

New York State Association for Computers and Technologies in Education

New York State Association for Computers and Technologies in Education (NYSCATE)

New York State School Music Association
New York State Association for College Admission Counseling

North Carolina

FIRST Team 2655, Inc., The Flying Platypi
North Carolina CoSN

North Dakota

North Dakota Music Educator's Association

Ohio

FRC 3324 Metrobots
Ohio Music Education Association

Oregon

Oregon Music Education Association
Salem Keizer Education Foundation

Pennsylvania

Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania
Marine Advanced Technology Education (MATE) PA
Parkland School District
Progressive Music
PAECT

Rhode Island

Rhode Island Society for Technology in Education (RISTE)

South Dakota

South Dakota Music Education Association

Tennessee

TETA - Tennessee Educational Technology Association

Texas

Texas K-12 CTO Council

Virginia

Tunstall High School Robotics Boosters Club
Virginia Society for Technology in Education (VSTE)

Washington

Washington Music Educators Association

West Virginia

West Virginia Foreign Language Teachers Association (WVFLTA)

West Virginia Music Educators Association

Wisconsin

FIRST Wisconsin

Washington Music Educators Association (WMEA)

WEMTA Wisconsin Educational Media & Technology Association

Wisconsin Educational Technology Leaders (CoSN)

Wisconsin Music Educators Association

Wyoming

Wyoming School Psychology Association