

July 21, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

We are writing on behalf of more than [800 health, research, education, child development, aging, social services, and workforce development organizations](#) to express our concern about the fiscal year (FY) 2018 302(b) allocation for the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations (Labor-HHS-ED) bill. The allocation of \$164.06 billion does not provide any new resources for the bill's critical programs after seven years of austerity, since the \$3 billion increase is needed to help offset a decrease in the resources that had previously been supported by savings from mandatory programs. While we appreciate the Senate Appropriation Committee's effort to maintain funding for this bill in the face of an austere budget environment, this level of funding remains too low to meet the true labor, health, and education needs of this nation.

Since 2010, the 302(b) allocation for this spending bill has been cut by 16 percent, adjusted for inflation. These cuts have eroded programs that touch the lives of every American. Programs that protect us from threats to our health including infectious diseases like Zika virus. That support students from pre-K through graduate school to ensure future generations are globally competitive. That get Americans ready to work in the 21st Century American economy. Even programs that have received increases in recent years – biomedical research, the opioid epidemic, special education, and Head Start, for example - are still not keeping pace with increased demand, and while WIOA state grants have seen modest increases in recent years, they are still nearly 40 percent below FY 2001 levels in inflation-adjusted terms.

As we noted in our letter to you in May, continued cuts to the Labor-HHS-Education bill are limiting the capacity of even our best proven programs, while simultaneously leaving no room for new opportunities to improve Americans' lives and livelihoods. Continued cuts to these programs are:

- Slowing scientific discovery in basic, biomedical, and health services research that prevents disease, improves health, and curbs medical costs;
- Eroding the public health infrastructure and workforce, limiting our ability to respond to public health crises and monitor health trends for new and emerging threats;

- Hindering efforts to close troubling achievement gaps, raise overall student achievement, and increase high school graduation, college access and college completion rates;
- Leaving far too many low-income children without access to high quality preschool and other early learning opportunities;
- Hindering efforts of our local employers to fill the approximately five million jobs in the U.S. because too many workers lack the necessary postsecondary education and credentials to fill these positions;
- Preventing seven million citizens from accessing the critical workforce and job training services that Congress overwhelmingly authorized in 2014; and
- Ignoring the needs of individuals who find themselves without a high school credential and who need a pathway back to education, employment and active citizenship.

An increase in the allocation that results in more resources will require Congress to come together to enact a bipartisan budget agreement to stop sequestration's harmful cuts and raise the spending caps for nondefense discretionary (NDD) programs. Only then will we be able to sufficiently invest in America's health, education, and workforce.

If you have questions about this statement or the community's concerns, please contact:

Emily Holubowich, Coalition for Health Funding (eholubowich@dc-crd.com);

Sheryl Cohen, Committee for Education Funding (cohen@cef.org); or

Kermit Kaleba, Campaign to Invest in America's Workforce (kermitk@nationalskillscoalition.org).