

Appropriations

Both the House and Senate Labor Health Human Services Education and other (LHHS) appropriations subcommittees have passed their FY19 funding proposals. (FY19 dollars will be in schools for the 2019-20 school year). LHHS is the appropriations bill that funds the U.S. Department of Education (USED). Neither chamber has yet to schedule time for the LHHS bill before the full appropriations committee; the House has twice delayed its full committee vote and may be considering a July 11 vote. Both chambers not only rejected the Trump administration's privatization agenda, but ALSO its proposed consolidation of USED and the Department of Labor.

The House bill provides a very nominal increase to USED. It level funds ESSA Title II and provides a small increase to IDEA (\$50 m); Title IV (\$100 m); Perkins (\$115 m); and Impact Aid (\$52 m). The bill level funds Title I.

The Senate bill provides a more sizeable increase (\$540 m) to USED. It increases Title I, Title IV and IDEA all each by \$125 million. Charters receive a \$45 million increase and Impact Aid receives a \$25 million increase. Title II and Perkins are level funded.

Moving forward: The overall allocations to LHHS differ by \$2 billion between the House and Senate. They will need to reconcile these differences in any final funding bill. AASA and ASBO urge the committees to ensure that the final mark is closer to the proportional increase LHHS should receive given the overall increase to non-defense discretionary funding in FY19. The \$18.8 billion increase would translate to a \$5.5 billion increase for LHHS, higher than even the Senate bill, which provides \$2 billion increase to LHHS.

Talking Points:

- Thank your members of Congress for the final FY18 package, which provided a \$3.9 billion increase to USED, a critical investment that worked to restore the continued pressure of recession cuts. The FY18 allocations must be the starting point for any FY19 discussions. Even with this significant funding increase, the final FY18 allocation is below what it would have been if Congress had level funded USED since FY12 and just adjusted for inflation.
- AASA and ASBO oppose any effort to direct public dollars to private education. We oppose all vouchers and privatization schema. We ask Congress to continue to prioritize investment in critical formula programs designed to level the playing field, including IDEA, Title I and Title IV.
- Urge your delegation to increase investment in the LHHS bills, and direct a larger share of the overall increase in non-defense discretionary funding to LHHS, to support education.

Perkins Career and Technical Education

Congress is attempting to re-write the law governing the Perkins CTE program. The Perkins program provides low, but meaningful, levels of funding for district career and technical education programs. Both the House and the Senate now have bills to reauthorize the program and it is widely expected that a bill to reauthorize the Perkins program will be signed into law this year. AASA/ASBO had strongly endorsed the bipartisan House bill that passed in 2017 because it addressed our major issues with the program:

- 1) Dramatically reduced paperwork associated with the local plan and reporting.
- 2) Streamlined the accountability system by ensuring districts did not have to make “continuous improvement” on every metric each year or face improvement activities.
- 3) Eliminated a provision that allows states to withhold funding from districts if they did not improve quickly enough on one or more accountability measures.

It also ensured districts are meaningfully engaging with business and industry partners as well as higher-education institutions to regularly confirm CTE program quality. It also recommends that districts use workforce data to ensure their coursework and programs are relevant to their local, regional or state workforce need.

On June 26, the Senate HELP Committee also passed a bipartisan rewrite of the Perkins CTE Act. The bill was not endorsed by the Association of Career and Technical Education—the organization that represents local CTE directors—or our organizations. The Senate bill does reduce the paperwork burden on districts, but not as substantially as the House bill. It also keeps the requirement that districts make continuous improvement, although it allows the state to set its own performance goals with input from stakeholders (including school leaders). It also maintains the threat that if districts do not improve fast enough they could lose funding.

AASA/ASBO strongly prefers the House bill to the Senate bill. These two bills will have to be conferenced together soon and it could occur as soon as this week. Since the process is taking place now, you should make sure to weigh in.

Talking Points

- I support the accountability and improvement structure in the House bill. It ensures districts receive technical assistance if they fail to meet performance goals. It also gives districts 3 years to meet state targets before they must implement an improvement plan and receive technical assistance from the state. In contrast, the Senate bill only gives districts 2 years to meet state-determined goals and allows the state to threaten taking a district’s funding away if they do not meet these goals adequately.
- I do not support language in the Senate bill that requires districts to continuously improve. There are many circumstances in which a decrease in numerical performance levels may not represent an actual decrease in the quality of the program, but instead might be reflective of changes in program offerings, student populations served, economic conditions, etc. There are many examples where a program may not be able to continually improve and we reject the continuation of this construct in a program that is woefully underfunded.
- The funding level of Perkins is close to that of ESSA Title IV. We saw a purposeful structure of Title IV to be designed with flexibility and deference to state and local education leaders, much like ESSA overall. We are concerned that Perkins, while similarly funded, has a disproportionately high accountability construct.

Higher Education Act

The House committee has already passed the PROSPER Act, a bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act. Chairwoman Foxx is pushing her colleagues to support the bill and bring it to the House floor. AASA and ASBO are opposed to the PROSPER Act. It eliminates all teacher preparation and teacher supports from the HEA and in its place creates a “one grant, one loan, two repayment plans” system. The bill:

1. Eliminates Title II, which includes the Teacher Quality Partnership Grants that support teacher residency programs through partnerships with school districts and Institutes of Higher Education.
2. Eliminates TEACH Grants, which provide \$4,000 per year for students interested in teaching. TEACH Grants require the recipient to teach four of her first eight years out of college in a high-needs school.
3. Eliminates all loan forgiveness programs for teachers, including Public Service Loan Forgiveness, Teacher Loan Forgiveness, and Perkins Loan Cancellation.
4. Creates only two loan repayment options – either pay all loans off in 10 years or pay 10 percent of your income until they are paid in full.

We are concerned that the elimination of these programs, particularly Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), will increase teacher shortage issues throughout the country, particularly in rural areas. By eliminating incentives for college students to study education, teach in high-needs schools and remain in the classroom, this bill will make it harder for many to choose and remain in education. Because teacher salaries remain very low in many states, the two repayment plans available would leave teachers paying on their loans their entire career.

The Senate, on the other hand, has made it clear that HEA reauthorization will not happen in this Congress. The fear is that if the PROSPER Act passes, it will become the starting point for negotiations in the next Congress.

Talking Points (for Representatives only)

- Oppose the PROSPER Act! It will harm the district’s ability to hire quality new teachers and will leave teachers with higher debt and fewer incentives to remain in the classroom.
- Talk about teacher shortage issues in your district, if applicable, to illustrate the reality of the issue in the Representative’s district and provide them with cover for opposing.
- For Democrats, thank them for their commitment to supporting future teachers, as they are all committed to opposing the PROSPER Act.

Other Issues

Often times, ASBO and AASA are tracking federal policies that ‘pop up’ and need attention but are not organizational priorities or issues that need a full page of talking points. They still warrant member feedback, though, and may come up in your meetings on Capitol Hill. We have a handful of such issues this summer and we have collected a brief summary and talking point for each on this page.

Anti-Integration Language: Remove anti-integration language from the final LHHS appropriations bill. Ask your delegation to ensure that sections 301 and 302 of the appropriations text, as well as section 426 of GEPA, are removed from the final FY19 appropriations bills. Current law includes these outdated statutes, which acts as an anti-integration provision. This problematic language bars the use of federal funds to transport students for purposes of racial integration. This prohibition undercuts Congress’ intent in reauthorizing the Magnet School Assistance Program (MSAP), constrains school improvement strategies, and undermines the ability of education innovators to implement new school improvement techniques. These provisions reduce state and local district efforts to flexibly implement the education program that best serves the needs of their students and communities. We applaud the House and Senate for the steps they have taken to remove sections 301 and 302 and ask that work will be completed with the removal of 426 from GEPA.

WiFi on Buses Act: In late June, both AASA and ASBO were pleased to sponsor the introduction of a brand new bill which would provide wireless internet on school buses to help close the homework gap. Currently, millions of students need access to the internet to complete their school assignments but lack access at home. This gap especially impacts low-income, rural and tribal students who must find other ways to get online to complete their homework. This bill would allow the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to update the list of allowable services in the E-Rate program to include reimbursement to schools that place WiFi technology on school buses carrying students. The bill is co-sponsored by Rep. Peter Welch (D-VT) and corresponding legislation has been introduced in the Senate by Sens. Tom Udall (D-NM) and Cory Gardner (R-CO). Ask your Senators to support S 2958 and your Representative to support the WiFi on Buses Act (it did not have a number at the time of printing).

Vouchers: The Trump Administration as well as many Republicans in Congress are laser focused on finding ways to send public dollars to private schools. It would be a disservice to our democracy and the goal of providing equitable educational opportunities for children if we siphon limited federal resources away from public schools and into unaccountable private schools that can pick and choose who they educate. We must enhance federal funding for our signature federal education programs that level the playing field for students in poverty, not siphon resources away from them to provide alternative and unaccountable education options for a select few students. Attempts earlier this Congress to voucherize Impact Aid funding and allow families who homeschool or attend private school to receive federal funding are strongly opposed.

Nutrition: Both the House and Senate have passed bills to reauthorize the Farm Bill this year and are likely to begin the process of conferencing the two bills into one compromise. While we do not take a stand on most elements of the bills, the House bill removes the ability for states to broaden categorical eligibility, through which families enrolled in TANF, SSI, or state General Assistance can be enrolled in SNAP and school meals. In removing broad-based categorical eligibility, the House bill would eliminate 265,000 students from the school meal program. In doing so, district FRPL numbers would be impacted and eligibility for the Community Eligibility Provision may also be harmed for many schools and districts. Tell your members of Congress to urge the conference committee to follow the Senate and continue to allow states to provide this flexibility.

STOP School Violence Act: After the tragedy at Parkland, Congress acted quickly to create a new funding stream to support efforts to deter school violence. The passage of the STOP School Violence Act was a small, but meaningful bipartisan achievement. It authorizes \$75 million in funding for FY18 and \$100 million in funding for the following nine years for states and districts for school threat assessment systems, crisis intervention training, physical hardware and more. While this funding stream is inadequate to address the safety needs of most districts, it is still important that Congress continue to fund it this year.

Medicaid: We remain concerned about the ability of school leaders to receive Medicaid funding in this political climate. Specifically, Republicans in the House have expressed interest in a renewed Medicaid debate if they retain the House. Medicaid is the third largest funding stream for schools and many district leaders use Medicaid to provide critical mental health services for students. In light of the need to address the mental and physical needs of our students, we think Congress and the Trump administration should be doing more to improve Medicaid billing that enables districts to meet the diverse healthcare needs of students and attempts that will undermine reimbursement to districts should be soundly rejected.

Immigration: AASA and ASBO have no position on the overall efforts to update federal immigration policy. We are monitoring current discussions only as they impact the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and the DREAM Act of 2017, legislation that would provide a pathway to citizenship for DACA-eligible individuals. AASA supports the continuation of the DACA protections, and as they were rescinded, updated its position to be supporting permanent solution to the DACA issue, as resolved through the DREAM Act of 2017. Should this question come up, we have no position on the wall, border security, visas or family-sponsored migration. We support a permanent solution to the DACA issue and will support a package or proposal that includes the DREAM Act of 2017 (or a very similar provision).

Infrastructure: President Trump's FY19 budget proposal included his Infrastructure Plan. AASA and ASBO are very interested in an infrastructure plan but are concerned that the President's plan has no explicit provision to include public schools. There is no traction on Capitol Hill right now for an Infrastructure Plan (there is no money to pay for the plan and there is no floor time). That said, we are being diligent in our outreach and have made inroads with Congress so that should they decide to move on an infrastructure proposal, their plan would provide an explicit role for public schools. If you are asked about infrastructure, you can say that we are interested in an infrastructure proposal, that the nation's public schools are one of the oldest and largest forms of public infrastructure in the nation, and as such, any plan coming out of Congress must include an explicit provision to support schools. This could include funds directly supporting renovation, repair and new build, as well as financing and tax policy and bonding options.