

March 24, 2015

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chairman
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Senate Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole, Chairman
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Appropriator,

On behalf of AASA, The School Superintendents Association, representing more than 10,000 school system leaders across the country, I write to share our federal funding priorities for federal fiscal year 2016 (FY16) dollars. We urge you to work in a bipartisan manner to invest in our nation's public schools to the maximum extent possible, with a priority on resolving sequestration and targeting dollars to formula driven programs, including Title I and IDEA.

When it comes to the portion of federal funding available for our nation's public schools, the reality is that FY16 represents a third consecutive year of level-funding. That means that as the nation's public schools became more diverse and enrolled more students, the federal investment in these schools stagnated, failing to keep pace with inflation.

The pressures of sequestration continue to hinder adequate investment in education. By 2016, the cumulative effect of sequestration will be substantial. Adjusting for general inflation, the 2016 cap on non-defense appropriations will be 17 percent (\$103 billion) below the 2010 level, and the 2016 cap on defense appropriations will be 15 percent (\$94 billion) below the 2010 level. The effects of the caps and sequestration are even more dramatic when measured relative to the size of the economy: Outlays for non-defense appropriated programs are projected to be 3.1 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2016—equal to the lowest percentage recorded at any point since 1962, which is as far back as data go on this basis.

Federal dollars may represent a small portion of overall K-12 funding, but they play a critical role in supporting the efforts of our nation's public schools in preparing student to be college and career ready. We urge appropriators to bolster FY16 funding to support school efforts to close achievement gaps, increase graduation rates and improve student learning and achievement. Most specifically, we prioritize the following programs:

Title I: As the core program in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) program, Title I works to level the playing field for those students living in poverty, who have faced historical disadvantages. Title I targets limited, critical federal dollars to those with greatest need, and is designed to ensure that those students master curricula and meet state standards. AASA supports a funding increase of \$100 million for Title I in FY16.

IDEA: Congress has yet to meet even half of its original commitment to fund 40 percent of the additional cost associated with educating students with disabilities, with FY15 levels covering a mere 16 percent. Investing in IDEA, a federal flagship formula program designed to help level the education playing field for students with disabilities, is an investment in our nation's students and their future, and represents an indication that Congress is serious in meeting its commitment to helping school districts meet the needs of all students. AASA supports a \$100 million increase for IDEA in FY16.

Education Technology: Title II of ESEA is designed to ensure a sustained, systematic and coordinated investment in educational technology leadership needed to drive education innovation and continuous improvement. AASA supports a funding level of \$100 for this program, level with FY10 funding, the last time this program received funds.

Rural Education Achievement Program: AASA supports an overall funding level for REAP of \$200 million. This amount would help rural districts overcome the additional costs associated with geographic isolation, a smaller number of students, higher transportation and employee benefit costs, and increased poverty.

Thank you for your leadership on the funding of our nation's schools, and we very much appreciate your efforts in helping Congress work toward supporting students and schools through these funding priorities.

Sincerely,



Noelle Ellerson
Associate Executive Director, Policy & Advocacy

cc: Members of the Senate Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations Subcommittee
Members of the House Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations Subcommittee