

March **, 2019

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The *** undersigned organizations—representing the full range of stakeholders supporting the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill (Labor-HHS)—urge you to significantly boost the fiscal year (FY) 2020 allocation for that Subcommittee to address vital and long-neglected needs. The programs and services funded by the Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee have a profound impact on health and well-being, child development, educational and skills attainment, and productivity, yet they have been overlooked in the appropriations process over the last decade. Even in years when non-defense discretionary funding increased, the Subcommittee's allocation remained flat or received only a small share of the increase. Most recently, for FY 2019 the bill received just a 0.6 percent increase in funding even though overall non-defense discretionary funding increased by 3 percent, shortchanging important services and activities by billions of dollars.

To provide workable allocations for the FY 2020 appropriations bills, Congress will need to raise the cap on non-defense discretionary spending substantially above the FY 2019 level both to support ongoing services across the government and to accommodate the increased cost of the decennial census and the VA Choice program. We urge you to take that opportunity to address the long-standing needs of the Labor-HHS-Education bill, whose programs strengthen the nation by improving Americans' lives and meeting basic needs for a broad range of constituencies. The bill has lost almost \$16 billion in purchasing power over the last decade; it would take an allocation of \$194 billion just to return to the FY 2010 level in inflation-adjusted dollars.

The effects of chronic underfunding for the Labor-HHS-Education bill has impacted programs that support education, public health, health research, job training, and social services. The effects include:

- Serving 1.5 million fewer low-income people through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) in 2018 than in 2010, despite growing need, because funding was reduced from \$5.1 billion to \$3.7 billion over this period.
- 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 raise overall student achievement, close troubling achievement gaps, and increase high school graduation rates, college affordability, and college completion.

- 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 six million open jobs in the U.S. because too many workers lack the necessary postsecondary education and credentials to fill these positions.
- Preventing almost one million citizens from accessing the critical workforce and job training services that Congress overwhelmingly authorized last year.
- 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.

Without a substantial increase in the Subcommittee's allocation, it will be virtually impossible to meaningfully expand investments in important initiatives—such as public health emergency preparedness and infectious disease surveillance, implementing the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act, continuing to improve college affordability and completion, or achieving the intended innovation of the bipartisan Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA)—without deep cuts in other equally important initiatives.

We urge you to commit to improving the lives of Americans by significantly raising the cap on non-defense discretionary spending above the FY 2019 level and then boosting the allocation for the Labor-HHS-Education bill for FY 2020 to support needed services to the American public.

If you have questions about this letter, please contact:

- Sheryl Cohen, Committee for Education Funding (cohen@cef.org)
- Emily Holubowich, Coalition for Health Funding (eholubowich@dc-crd.com);
- Katie Spiker, Campaign to Invest in America's Workforce (KatieS@nationalskillscoalition.org); or
- Debbie Weinstein, Coalition on Human Needs (dweinstein@chn.org)

Sincerely,

Cc: Chairs and Ranking Members, House and Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations
Subcommittees