



March 2, 2018

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Room H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Room H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey,

As you move forward with finalizing fiscal year (FY) 2018 funding levels the America Forward Coalition urges you to include increased funding as available by the new budget caps recently agreed to by Congress for the programs identified below that spur innovation, reward results, advance equity, and catalyze cross-sector partnerships to propel America forward.

The America Forward Coalition is a network of some 70 social innovation organizations that champion effective and efficient solutions to our country's most pressing social problems. Our Coalition members are achieving measurable outcomes in more than 14,500 communities nationwide, touching the lives of 8 million Americans each year, and driving progress in education, workforce development, early learning, poverty alleviation, public health, pay for success, social innovation, national service, and criminal justice reform. Since 2007, America Forward's community of entrepreneurs has played a leading role in driving the national dialogue on social innovation and advocating for lasting policy change.

Our Coalition organizations are working in communities across the country and believe that non-defense discretionary funding is essential to economic recovery and growth, an adequate public health response, resources for our nation's schools and colleges, needed programming to help skill-up our workforce, activities for addressing our eroding infrastructure, and for ensuring our national security. We also strongly support a refocusing of government funding to what works. To do this, we need to support funding for **innovation and evaluation**, the use of **tiered-evidence approaches** to target federal funding to programs that have **greater evidence of effectiveness**, and the inclusion of **performance-based funding** provisions to build the evidence base to ensure we know what is working and what does not before making drastic cuts to important programs that directly impact millions of children, youth and adults across this country. We know firsthand that evidence-based community partners play a critical role in increasing the return on investment of government dollars, and supporting our students and communities with responsive programs and solutions to tackle our most significant challenges.

We are eager to work with you to advance the policies outlined in this letter and urge you to include and prioritize the following programs in the relevant FY 2018 funding bills.

Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies

Department of Education

Elementary and Secondary Education

- **\$15.9 billion for Title I formula funds for local education agencies** to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps as well as the inclusion of report language reiterating the importance of evidence-based partnerships in developing and implementing school improvement programs under Title I, Part A.
- **\$14.1 billion for IDEA** to support infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities.
- **\$190 million for the LEARN Literacy Grant Program** to advance literacy skills for students from birth through grade 12.
- **\$2.35 billion for Title II-A formula grants to states** for flexibility to identify and implement high-quality professional development programming, including the option to set aside three percent of their funding to support activities designed specifically for school leaders.
- **\$1.19 billion for 21st Century Community Learning Centers** to support effective extended learning and enrichment opportunities that are connected to content covered during the school day through effective community-school partnerships.
- **\$675 million to continue to support and maintain initiatives at the Institute of Education Sciences** that will collect, analyze, and release data and evaluation studies, for internal users and the public, to answer pressing education questions.
- **\$180 million for the Education, Innovation, and Research (EIR)** to increase the number of high-quality applications to build evidence of effectiveness and to demonstrate the feasibility of scaling effective interventions.
- **\$14.5 million for the School Leader Recruitment and Support Program** to seed models of promising principal preparation programs, scale preparation programs with results, and support effective professional development for school leaders in the field.
- **\$200 million for the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Fund (TSL)** to develop, implement, and improve high-quality human capital management systems for teachers, principals, and other personnel in high-need schools.
- **\$600 million for the Charter Schools Program** to support high-quality charter schools that break the mold of the status quo and create new solutions to meet critical needs.
- **\$94 million for the Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) Grant Program** to recruit and develop teachers, principals, or other school leaders.
- **\$1.6 billion for Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants** to support locally designed efforts to provide students with well-rounded educational experiences, access to advanced coursework, safe and healthy learning environments, and personalized instruction, including through the effective use of technology.

Higher Education

The America Forward Coalition was thrilled to see that the two-year budget deal includes a commitment to increasing funding by \$4 billion over FY 2018 and FY 2019 for “student centered programs that aid college completion and affordability, including those that help police officers,

teachers and firefighters” such as the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program. The Coalition strongly supports increased investments in these areas and strongly encourages appropriators to provide:

- **Increased investments in student financial aid assistance, particularly an increase in the Pell Grant maximum award to \$6,020 which would continue to adjust the grant award to inflation** and help ensure students can earn a post-secondary credential without having to take on more debt that they can afford.
- **\$757 million for Federal Supplement Education Opportunity Grants program and \$990 million for the Federal Work Study program**, to provide enough flexibility to meet unique needs that may arise throughout a student’s term as well as provide opportunities for students to link learning to experience.
- **\$15.1 million for Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program** to support the participation of low-income parents in post-secondary education through the provision of campus-based child care services.
- **\$43.1 million for the Teacher Quality Partnership Grants program** to support initiatives that strengthen educator preparation efforts at institutions of higher education.
- **\$100 million for a new or re-envisioned Innovation in Higher Education grant program** to encourage innovation in higher education that is necessary to tackle and improve college persistence and completion rates, increase the efficiency and productivity of higher education, build evidence of what works, and scale up proven strategies.

Department of Health and Human Services

- **\$10.4 billion for Head Start and Early Head Start** to increase the number of children attending Head Start for a full school day and a full school year. This request includes an increase in funding for quality improvements and for stabilization of the Head Start workforce through a cost-of-living adjustment.
- **\$350 million for Preschool Development Grants** to support significant national investments necessary to ensure that all young people have access to a high-quality education and the opportunity to succeed.
- **Maintain \$400 million in mandatory funding for the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program** to fully fund efforts to develop and implement voluntary, evidence-based home visiting programs in communities across the country to improve maternal and newborn health, reduce child abuse and neglect, and improve family economic self-sufficiency.
- **\$5.8 billion for Child Care and Development Block Grants** an amount consistent with the recently approved two-year budget agreement and would provide low-income families that are working or participating in education and training with help paying for child care and improving the quality of care for all children.
- **Maintain \$75 million in mandatory funding for the State Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP)** to educate young people, specifically young ages 10-19 who are homeless, in foster care, live in rural areas, or in geographic areas with high teen birth rates on both abstinence and contraception to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.
- **\$104 million for the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program** to support the implementation of national, evidence-based programs and the development and evaluation of new and innovative approaches to prevent teen pregnancy.

Department of Labor

- **\$1.33 billion for major formula funds under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**, including the adult, youth, and dislocated worker funding streams and **\$3.2 million for WIOA technical assistance** to provide resources to support state implementation of WIOA.
- **\$6 million for the Workforce Data Quality Initiative** to continue to help build state and local data capacity for tracking employment and educational outcomes of WIOA workforce and job training program participants.
- **\$102.5 million for YouthBuild** grants that are used to engage low-income 16-24 year olds in a comprehensive full-time education, job training, and community service program in which students earn their GED or HSD while learning job skills by building affordable green housing under skilled supervision, or through providing health or technology services in their communities.

General Provisions- Departments of Labor and Education

- **Continued authority for Performance Partnership Pilots** to award up to 10 new pilots that allow States, tribes and localities to blend certain discretionary funding in order to improve education, employment and other key outcomes for vulnerable youth.

Corporation for National and Community Service

- **\$1.47 billion for the Corporation for National and Community Service, including an increase of \$300 million for AmeriCorps** so that members are able to continue to deliver high-impact, cost-effective, locally-determined services in communities and continue to fuel the implementation of innovative programs in a variety of fields.

Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies

Department of Justice

- **\$17.5 million for the Innovations in Community-Based Crime Reduction (formerly Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program)** to support data-driven, comprehensive, and community-oriented strategies to reduce crime, spur revitalization, and build community-police collaboration.
- **\$120 million for the Second Chance Act Program** to provide grants to establish and expand adult and juvenile offender reentry programs to reduce recidivism and help those exiting the justice system to rejoin their communities and lead productive lives, including **\$20 million for Pay for Success** projects to provide awards for supporting housing using performance-based metrics.
- **\$30 million for the Justice Reinvestment Initiative** to support states and localities in using a data-driven approach to improve public safety, reduce corrections spending, and to reinvest savings in effective strategies to decrease crime.

General Provisions- Department of Justice

- **Continued authority for Performance Partnership Pilots** to award up to 10 new pilots that allow States, tribes and localities to blend certain discretionary funding in order to improve education, employment and other key outcomes for vulnerable youth.

The America Forward Coalition respectfully requests that the above programs be included at the identified levels in the final fiscal year 2018 funding bills. We recognize the many difficult choices your Committees face and thank you for your ongoing support for policies that help communities find and test new ways of tackling seemingly intractable problems, using and building evidence to measurably improve people's lives. We look forward to working with you to advance these important issues in the months ahead.



Sincerely,

Members of the America Forward Coalition