



April 28, 2021

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

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
House Appropriations Committee
Room H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby, Chairwoman DeLauro, and Ranking Member Granger:

As the nation continues to grapple with critical funding and programmatic needs to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 crisis, and address the long-standing racial and socioeconomic inequities exacerbated by the pandemic, the America Forward Coalition is strongly supportive of Congress' efforts to provide emergency funding to support our nation's early childhood centers, K-12 schools, higher education institutions, national service, unemployed and underemployed workers, and children and families.

While the emergency funding will go a long way in responding to the current needs of the COVID-19 crisis, we believe that additional bold investments in federal programs are needed in order to address disruptions to learning and development, to close widening opportunity gaps for learners of all ages, and to mitigate the devastating cuts at the state and local level.

America Forward, along with our Coalition partners from America's Promise Alliance, AppleTree, KIPP, New Classrooms, Springboard Collaborative, Turnaround for Children, and Transcend, introduced our Education Preparedness Initiative (EPI), a proposal that recommends bold approaches to support the holistic, equitable, and innovative response and recovery that our nation's schools need in order to meaningfully close longstanding opportunity gaps that widened because of the pandemic. Our proposal specifically calls for:

- *Early childhood*: Increase funding for the Child Care Development Block Grant and Head Start.
- *K-12*: Increase funding for Titles I, II, and III; After School Programs; and IDEA.
- *Higher Education*: Increase maximum Pell Grant and support for institutions.
- *Opportunity youth*: Increase funding for innovative education and job training programs such as YouthBuild.
- *National Service*: Expand the number of service members, including AmeriCorps, to respond to expanded need; and increase service living allowances to ensure all Americans can serve regardless of their financial circumstances.

Now, as Congress begins the fiscal year (FY) 2022 appropriations process, the America Forward Coalition urges you to include funding for the programs identified below that advance equity, spur innovation, reward results, and catalyze cross-sector partnerships to propel America forward.

Our Coalition organizations, working in communities across the country, believe that we must invest in federal programs in order to ensure equitable economic recovery and growth, guarantee adequate public health responses, provide resources for our nation's schools and colleges, establish needed programming to help up-skill our workforce, support our eroding infrastructure, and ensure our national security.

We also strongly support a refocusing of government funding on investing in continuous evidence building and rewarding what works. To do this, we urge policymakers 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 to continue to build both evidence-building capacity and evidence; and the inclusion of **performance-based funding** provisions to link funding to measurable outcomes. To accomplish this we should work to ensure that (1) evidence of effectiveness and (2) a viable plan to evaluate, build evidence and evidence-building capacity become widespread criteria for competitive federal grant programs. This strategic approach will help to ensure that we know what works and what does not and that we strengthen our use of data and evidence to create more effective programs; thereby, allowing Congress to more effectively allocate resources and better serve millions of children, youth, and adults across this country.

Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

Department of Education

Elementary and Secondary Education

- **\$20 billion over FY2021 in Title I formula funds for local education agencies as an initial down payment towards tripling Title I.** This funding increase will help to provide all children with the opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps; we also urge the inclusion of report language reiterating the importance of evidence-based partnerships that support whole-learner approaches in developing and implementing school improvement programs under Title I, Part A.
- **\$13 billion over FY2021 in IDEA** to serve students with disabilities and support early childhood opportunities for students with disabilities such as Part B, Section 619, Part C, and Part D.
- **\$1 billion over the FY2021 investment level in Title II-A formula grants to states**, giving states flexibility to identify and implement high-quality professional development programming, and the option to set aside three percent of their funding to support activities designed specifically for school leaders. We request that these funds are also used to improve recruitment, placement, support, and retention of culturally competent and responsive educators, especially educators from underrepresented groups, to meet the needs of diverse student populations; equip educators to partner with parents in service of student learning; and to support the adoption of evidence-based, whole-learner approaches and experiences in both professional development and mentorship.
- **\$1.2 billion over the FY2021 investment level in Title III** to further support English Learners (EL)'s attainment of English language proficiency and ensure that states and districts have the

necessary resources to address the needs of EL students through whole-learner approaches, particularly at this time when the EL population is growing and many ELs' families have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

- **\$1 billion to increase the number of counselors, nurses, and mental health professionals in schools** to help address the physical and mental health toll on students, teachers, and school staff due to the COVID-19 pandemic, related disruptions to learning, and school closings.
- **\$430 million for Full Service Community Schools**, which play a critical role in providing comprehensive wrap-around services to students and their families, from afterschool to adult education opportunities and health and nutrition services.
- **\$100 million for a new grant program proposed by the Administration to help communities develop and implement strategies that would build more diverse student bodies.** Our Coalition is interested in learning more details regarding this proposal and supporting more diverse, inclusive, and equitable school environments for all.
- **Maintaining the FY2021 level of investment in the Comprehensive Literacy Development Grant Program** to advance literacy skills for students from birth through grade 12.
- **Doubling the investment in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers** to support effective extended learning and enrichment opportunities that develop a wide breadth of skills through a whole-learner approach, and are connected to content covered during the school day through effective community-school partnerships.
- The American Rescue Plan included \$100 million for the Institute of Educational Sciences (IES) to carry out research related to addressing pandemic-related student learning loss. We believe this is an important down payment to address these issues: **our EPI calls for a \$1 billion Education Equity and Preparedness Initiative** housed at the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) in order to understand what we have learned and to strengthen our education systems for the future.
- In addition to the above, we call for **maintaining the FY2021 investment level at the Institute of Education Sciences to continue to support initiatives** that will collect, analyze, and release data and evaluation studies, for internal users and the public, to answer pressing education questions.
- **Maintaining the FY2021 investment level in Education, Innovation, and Research (EIR)** to increase the number of high-quality applications, build evidence of effectiveness, and demonstrate the feasibility of scaling effective interventions.
- **\$30 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, particularly those who support the implementation of whole-learner approaches.
- **An increase of \$60 million over the FY2021 level for the Charter Schools Program** to support high-quality public charter schools that break the mold of the status quo and create new solutions to meet critical needs.
- **\$300 million for the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth** to identify and support students experiencing housing insecurity, ensure their access to school, and connect them to community supports.
- **Maintaining the FY2021 investment level for the Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) Grant Program** to recruit and develop teachers, principals, or other school leaders.
- **\$2 billion for Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants** to support locally designed efforts to provide students with well-rounded educational experiences, advanced coursework, safe and healthy learning environments, and personalized instruction, including through the effective use of technology.

- **Maintaining the FY2021 investment level in the School Safety and National Activities Program, including the School Climate Transformation Grant Program** to support the ongoing needs of students for trauma-informed care, strengthening school climate and improving behavioral outcomes for all students.
- **\$6 million for the American History and Civics-National Activities Grant Program** to promote innovation in instruction, learning, strategies, and professional development in American history, civics, and government. We also urge Congress to enact and fund the **The Civics Secures Democracy Act**, which is a bipartisan bill that creates grants for states and districts to support and expand access to American history and civics in order to meet the needs of today's students and our constitutional democracy.

Higher Education

- **Increase investments in student financial aid assistance, particularly an increase in the Pell Grant maximum award by \$400 as proposed in the President's Budget.** We also support the President's call for DREAMers to be eligible for Pell Grants if they otherwise meet Pell Grant eligibility requirements.
- **An increase of \$181 million over the FY2021 investment level for Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants program and an increase of at least \$290 million over the FY2021 investment level for the Federal Work Study program.** These increases will help reach full funding for these programs that provide needed aid for students to meet their college costs.
- Increasing the **investment level for the Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program** to \$500 million in order to further support the participation of under-resourced parents in postsecondary education through the provision of campus-based childcare services.
- **Maintaining the FY2021 investment level for the Teacher Quality Partnership Grants program** to support initiatives that strengthen educator preparation efforts at institutions of higher education and encourage a focus on preparing teachers to implement and lead whole-learner approaches.
- **\$100 million for a new or re-envisioned Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education grant program** to create, develop, implement, replicate, or scale evidence-based, outcomes-oriented, and field-initiated innovations to improve postsecondary access, matriculation, and completion using a tiered-evidence structure.
- \$219.4 million over **the FY2021 investment level in Federal TRIO programs and increasing support for GEAR UP by \$67 million over FY2021 levels** to support students into and through postsecondary education.
- **Increase funding by more than \$600 million over the FY2021 level for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs), Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), and Community Colleges** to enroll, retain, and graduate students to support programs that provide additional help to disadvantaged students, including those at community colleges, to ensure they succeed in and graduate from college.
- **\$30 million for the Augustus Hawkins Centers of Excellence**, which support enhanced educator preparation for teaching candidates at HBCUs and MSIs, to increase the number of profession-ready BIPOC educators and school leaders.

Department of Health and Human Services

- **An investment of \$11.9 billion for Head Start and Early Head Start which is an increase of \$1.2 billion over FY2021 investment levels** to increase the number of children attending Head Start for a full school day and a full school year.
- **\$450 million for Preschool Development Grants which is an increase of \$175 million over FY2021 investment levels 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.
- **An investment of \$7.4 billion for Child Care and Development Block Grants which is an increase of \$1.5 billion over the FY2021 investment level**, and which would provide under-resourced families working or participating in education and training with help paying for childcare and improving the quality of care for all children.
- In addition to the above, we support the Administration's plan to work with states to ensure funding provided through FY2022 appropriations funding, as well as through the American Rescue Plan Act, support increased wages for early educators and family child care providers, and move towards building a foundation to ensure low- and middle-income families can access high quality, affordable child care.
- **Maintaining the FY2021 investment level 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.
- **\$10 million for the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP)** to support programs that help teens achieve educational success, develop healthy behaviors and relationships, and exhibit life and leadership skills.
- **An increase of \$30 million over FY2021 investment levels within Special Projects of Regional and National Significance (SPRANS) for State Maternal Health Innovation Grants** to establish demonstration projects that implement evidence-based interventions to address critical gaps in maternity care service delivery and reduce and prevent maternal mortality, particularly to reduce disparate impacts on maternal mortality based on race and ethnicity. We also urge the continued expansion of Pay for Success and Pay for Performance approaches through the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program.

Department of Labor

- **The American Jobs Plan calls for a \$100 billion investment in our nation's Workforce Programs**, including investing in evidence-based approaches, wrap-around services, income supports, counseling and case management; paired with high-quality training and effective partnerships between educational institutions, unions, and employees. Our Coalition believes this type of bold investment and the inclusion of transitional job strategies, along with other funding increases targeted to programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), are necessary to ensure an equitable recovery.
- **\$10 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.
- **WIOA Pay for Performance authority** is a promising, innovative approach to using data, evidence, and evaluation to improve workforce development outcomes for the most vulnerable citizens. We request that you to direct the Department to continue to provide technical

assistance to states and localities to help them utilize Pay for Performance strategies and urge the Department to expeditiously clarify the Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) released on this topic in December 2020, in order to clear the way for state and local workforce boards to leverage these innovative, outcome-directed authorities.

- **An increase of \$250 million over FY2021 investment levels for YouthBuild grants** that are used to engage under-resourced 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.
- **Continued support for the Strengthening Community College Training Grants** program to continue to build the capacity of community colleges to meet labor market demand for a skilled workforce.

General Provisions- Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education

- **Midcareer Talent Pilot Proposal:** We urge the committee to fund a new pilot, empowering the Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to work together to initiate an interagency fellowship pilot to bring talented midcareer professionals from other sectors into the federal government for a two-year fellowship program. The pilot would utilize existing hiring authorities, including those under Schedule A(r) and placement authorities under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA). Fellows would work together across departments to increase agency alignment, coordination and innovation, and improve key measurable outcomes in select states, local jurisdictions, and/or tribal areas selected through this pilot.
- **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

- **An increase of \$646 million for the Corporation for National and Community Service** to ensure AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members are able to continue to deliver high-impact, cost-effective, locally determined services in communities, make service more accessible, and continue to fuel the implementation of innovative programs in a variety of fields.

Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

Department of Justice

- **Maintaining FY2021 investment levels 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.
- **Maintaining FY2021 investment levels 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. Within this amount, we ask that you include **\$20 million for Pay for Success** projects to provide awards

for supporting housing using performance-based metrics; and of that, permit \$10 million of those funds to be used to help implement the Permanent Supportive Housing Model.

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 FY 2022 appropriations bills. We recognize the many important 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.

We look forward to working with you to advance these important issues in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

Members of the America Forward Coalition

About America Forward

America Forward is the Washington, D.C.-based nonpartisan policy initiative of New Profit, a pioneering national venture philanthropy organization that invests in a portfolio of breakthrough social entrepreneurs and systems-change initiatives, catalyzes and builds their impact, and transforms how government and philanthropy pursue social change to ensure that all people can thrive.

America Forward unites social innovators with policymakers to advance a public policy agenda that advances equity, fosters innovation, rewards results, catalyzes cross-sector partnerships, and transforms local impact into national change. The America Forward Coalition comprises a network of over 100 social innovation organizations that champion innovative, effective, and efficient solutions to our country's most pressing social problems. Since 2007, our Coalition organizations have successfully advocated for lasting policy change in education, workforce development, and Pay for Success policy; leveraged \$1.7 billion for social innovation; and driven millions of federal resources toward programs that are achieving measurable results for those who need them most.