



April 13, 2023

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

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

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

Dear Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, Chairwoman Granger, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As Congress begins the fiscal year 2024 (FY24) appropriations process, the America Forward Coalition urges you to continue efforts to address the long-standing racial and socioeconomic inequities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic by including 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, greatly appreciate the investments you prioritized during the pandemic 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. We believe that we must build on these investments 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 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 the inclusion of performance-based funding provisions to link funding to measurable outcomes. This approach will help to ensure that we know what works and what does not; 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

- **\$36.7 billion 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 timely and meaningful stakeholder engagement and evidence-based partnerships that support whole-learner approaches in developing and implementing school improvement programs under Title I, Part A. We also request that you include language encouraging the Department to provide technical assistance to support partnerships between school districts and community based organizations to implement evidence-based tutoring models.
- **At least \$18.1 billion in IDEA funding** 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.
- **\$3 billion investment 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.
- **\$2 billion in Title III** to reflect and better support the growing number of English learners (EL) in our school system and ensure that states and districts have the necessary resources to provide effective teacher preparation and support parent engagement programs, including providing resources in their home language.
- **\$428 million to increase the number of counselors, nurses, and mental health professionals in schools,** building on funding from the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022, 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.
- **\$443 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 FY2023 level of investment in the Comprehensive Literacy Development Grant Program** to advance literacy skills for students from birth through grade 12.
- **A \$2 billion 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.

- We call for **\$900 million for the Institute of Education Sciences to continue to support initiatives** that will collect, analyze, and release data and evaluation studies to answer pressing education questions and drive a more accessible and equitable system.
- **\$100 million for the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) program** to support state policymakers, practitioners, individuals, and other stakeholders to improve data collection and use.
- \$514 million for **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.
- **\$149 million for the School Leader Recruitment and Support Program** to seed models of promising principal preparation programs, scale preparation programs that show results and increase the diversity of school leaders, and support effective professional development for school leaders in the field, particularly those who support the implementation of whole-learner approaches.
- **\$500 million 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.
- **\$800 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.
- **\$140 million 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 that include comprehensive academic, social-emotional, and mental and behavioral health supports that address the needs of the whole learner, advanced coursework, safe and healthy learning environments, and personalized instruction, including through the effective use of technology.
- **\$601 million for 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.
- **\$73 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 **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 we support efforts to double the Pell Grant maximum award.** We also support the President's call for participants in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program to be eligible for Pell Grants if they otherwise meet Pell Grant eligibility requirements.
- Authorize and fund the **Emergency Grant Aid for College Students** to provide direct financial assistance to ensure an emergency cost does not derail a student's ability to complete college.
- **Fund at least \$1 billion for the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants program and at least \$1.5 billion 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.
- **Provide \$300 million 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.
- **\$45 million for the Augustus Hawkins Centers of Excellence**, which supports enhanced educator preparation for teaching candidates at HBCUs and MSIs, to increase the number of profession-ready BIPOC educators and school leaders.
- **\$725 million for the 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, completion and career success using a tiered-evidence structure; along with \$150 million targeted to providing mental health services for college students.
- **\$165 million for the Postsecondary Student Success Grants program** which will enable the expansion of evidence-based strategies to improve postsecondary retention and completion rates. In addition, we believe that the final language should include labor market outcomes along with college retention and completion.
- **\$1.298 billion for Federal TRIO programs and \$408 million for GEAR UP** to support students into and through postsecondary education.
- Support programs at minority serving institutions that provide additional help to disadvantaged students, including those at community colleges, to ensure they enroll, succeed in and graduate from college, by **increasing funding by more than \$429 million over the FY2023 level for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs), Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), and Community Colleges; along with funding Hispanic Serving Institutions at \$300 million.**

Department of Health and Human Services

- **An investment of \$17.47 billion for Head Start and Early Head Start** which includes specific funding for the expansion of Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships and to ensure that Head Start programs are supported by a quality workforce.
- **\$500 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.
- **An investment of \$12.4 billion for Child Care and Development Block Grants**, 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.
- **\$111 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.
- **\$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.
- **\$56 million for State Maternal Health Innovation Grants within the Special Projects of Regional and National Significance (SPRANS) program** to establish demonstration projects that

implement evidence-based interventions to address critical gaps in maternity care service delivery and reduce maternal mortality among Black or African American and American Indian or Alaskan Native women, who are three times more likely than White women to die from pregnancy-related deaths. 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 and postpartum coverage in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP); that would include, follow-up care for diabetes, postpartum depression and/or postpartum anxiety, hypertension and substance use disorders (SUD), during the SPRANS demonstration period.

- Additional support for programs under the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to reflect the critical need to address the ongoing mental health crisis in our nation, including:
 - **Increase the Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention Grants to \$20 million and State Grants to \$50 million** to assist colleges and universities in building essential capacity and infrastructure to support expanded efforts to promote wellness and help-seeking of all students.
 - **Fund Project AWARE at \$244 million and Mental Health Awareness Training Grants at \$64 million.**

Department of Labor

- **The President's Budget includes critical increases in our workforce training programs including for Adult and Youth Activities and Dislocated Workers**, which we support as we look to ensure an equitable recovery from the pandemic and ensure that all workers can benefit from the robust career and training services necessary to support economic mobility.
- **\$200 million for a new Workforce Development Innovation Fund** tiered evidence program to support the scale-up of proven workforce training programs and the development and testing of promising models, as proposed in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2022 and modeled on the bipartisan Expanding Pathways to Employment Act.
- **\$40 million for the Workforce Data Quality Initiative** to continue to help build state and local capacity for tracking employment and educational outcomes data of WIOA workforce and job training program participants, disaggregated by demographic characteristics, addressing long underinvestment in workforce data infrastructure as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2022 has proposed to do.
- **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 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.
- **\$200 million from the Dislocated Worker National Reserve for the Sectoral Employment through Career Training for Occupational Readiness (SECTOR)** program as proposed in the President's budget, providing essential support for proven sectoral training programs.

- **\$193 million for YouthBuild grants** 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 high school diploma while learning job skills.
- **\$100 million 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.
- **Support for the establishment of the Civilian Climate Corps across federal agencies including \$15 million at the Labor Department** for job training and paid community service for underrepresented populations including people of color and women in clean energy and climate mitigation. The program would include supportive services for participants.
- **\$335 million for the Apprenticeship Program** including the expansion of registered apprenticeship opportunities, increasing access for historically underrepresented groups, including people of color and women, and expanding pre-apprenticeship, youth apprenticeship and degreed apprenticeship programs.
- **\$170 million for the Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO)** to provide competitive grants to nonprofit workforce development organizations for employment and reentry services for individuals with criminal legal histories and for youth who have not completed school.

AmeriCorps (Corporation for National and Community Service)

- **\$1.6 billion for National and Community Service** to increase participation in AmeriCorps 100,000 members and to raise corps member benefits to reach the living allowance levels as outlined in the bipartisan CORPS Act.

Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

Department of Justice

- **Maintaining FY2023 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 FY2023 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. Priority should be given to pilots that improve equity in access to services and include organizations that are led by, or primarily serve, historically marginalized and underserved populations.

The America Forward Coalition respectfully requests that the above programs be included at the identified levels in the FY 202 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 leads a Coalition of more than 100 social innovation organizations across the country. Every day, these organizations are working in 15,000 communities nationwide, impacting more than 9 million lives every year.

Together, America Forward Coalition members advocate for public policies that foster innovation, identify effective solutions, reward results, catalyze cross-sector partnerships, and advance equity in workforce development, education, early childhood, and poverty alleviation. Since 2007, our Coalition organizations have successfully advocated for lasting policy change; 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.