President’s Proposed Budget Jeopardizes the Well-Being and Education of Millions of Children and Youth

Bethesda, MD—The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) joins with other education and children’s advocacy organizations in expressing deep concern regarding President Trump’s proposed budget for FY18 in terms of its impact on children’s learning and well-being. NASP strongly supports a robust public school system that upholds the rights, well-being, and educational and mental health needs of all students in every community. While we are glad that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) appears to be intact, the budget guts significant programs within the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and calls for steep reductions in Medicaid funds. These proposals directly attack important underpinnings of a robust education system and pose a serious threat to the nation’s ability to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all of America’s children.

Chief among NASP’s immediate concerns are:

1. **Undercutting Title I**—Although the budget does not directly cut funds from Title I, which is meant to help schools with high concentrations of low income students, it proposes an increase of $1 billion to go to school districts that allow Title I funds to follow children to the school of their choice. This proposal, known as Title I portability, undermines the true intent of Title I, which is to help entire school communities struggling with poverty provide robust whole school improvement efforts, while also providing targeted interventions to individual students in need of additional support. NASP urges Congress to reject this proposal and instead provide a much needed increase in Title I to ensure that schools are able to implement and scale up these vital supports and services.

2. **Expanding Ineffective School Choice Options**—NASP opposes efforts in this budget to create a “school choice” or voucher system that funnels public education dollars to pre-K–12 schools that lack public accountability, require the loss or declination of rights afforded to students or families, or enable discriminatory practices. Current research regarding voucher programs predominately shows either no improvement or declines in academic achievement as compared to students in traditional public schools. NASP supports additional research into what forms of school choice genuinely improve outcomes for struggling students but not at the expense of effective public education as an inalienable right for all children right now.

3. **Eliminating Critical Student Supports (Title IV Part A)**—The proposed budget completely zeroes out funding for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant (also known as Title IV Part A), which is a new formula funded grant that would have enabled school districts to engage in efforts to provide a well-rounded curriculum, support safe and healthy students, and promote the effective use of technology. The program was authorized at $1.65 billion, yet funded at only $400 million in FY17. Eliminating these funds undermines school districts’ ability to provide desperately needed academic, nutritional, behavioral, mental and physical health, and safety programs that directly contribute to the school and life success of millions of children and youth.
4. **Gutting the Office of Civil Rights**—The budget guts the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR), which provides critical guidance and oversight in ensuring that schools protect the civil rights of all students regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Upholding students’ civil rights is not only legally mandated; doing so is essential to creating safe, supportive, and effective learning environments for children and youth. The significant reduction in funding for the OCR will further hinder its ability to respond to the increasing number of discrimination complaints in our nation’s public schools and universities.

5. **Eliminating Public Service Loan Forgiveness**—The budget also puts at risk the nation’s ability to attract a skilled education workforce by eliminating public service loan forgiveness for teachers, specialized instructional support personnel (SISP), and other educators who work in public service for at least 10 years. Existing shortages in these professions will only worsen as the cost of appropriate training becomes untenable. Currently, over a half million students are enrolled in this program.

6. **Damaging Reductions in and Restructuring of Medicaid**—The Administration proposes $800 billion in cuts to Medicaid and makes fundamental changes to the current structure of the program, which could have devastating effects on our nation’s children, especially those with disabilities. Many students rely on schools for their basic health care needs, and, due to the underfunding of IDEA, school districts rely on Medicaid reimbursements to ensure that students with disabilities have access to needed supports and services. Potential consequences of this critical loss of funds include: (a) fewer health services, particularly in high need and hard to serve areas such as rural and urban communities; (b) further cuts to general education as districts may divert funds from other educational programs to provide the services as mandated under IDEA; (c) job loss, as Medicaid supports the salaries of many health professionals employed by school districts; and (d) fewer mental health supports. Seven out of ten students receiving mental health services receive these services at school. Cuts to Medicaid would further marginalize these critical services and leave students without access to care.

Maintaining a high-quality public education system that supports the whole child is one of the greatest responsibilities of the United States and one of the wisest investments in our nation’s future. We urge Congress to fully fund ESSA as written and reject cuts to Medicaid. We look forward to working with our nation’s leaders to make this a reality.

NASP represents 25,000 school psychologists throughout the United States and abroad. NASP empowers school psychologists by advancing effective practices to improve students’ learning, behavior, and mental health.

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For additional information and resources to help support children and youth, visit [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org).

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