



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
School Psychologists

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April 26, 2019

Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Chair
House Labor, HHS, Education, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee

Honorable Tom Cole, Ranking Member
House Labor, HHS, Education, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee

Honorable Roy Blunt, Chair
Senate Labor, HHS, Education, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee

Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Senate Labor, HHS, Education, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee

Re: FY20 Appropriations

On behalf of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), I urge you to include funding for the critical programs outlined in this letter as you consider federal appropriations for departments and agencies under the jurisdiction of your subcommittee for FY2020. While this is not an exhaustive list, we consider these programs to be the most critical investments the Labor-HHS subcommittee can make in order to improve outcomes for our nation's students. NASP believes that the federal government has a responsibility to make meaningful investments in programs that help ensure all students have access to the academic, social-emotional, and mental and behavioral health services they need to thrive at school, at home, and in life. With recognition that a larger budget deal to raise the caps on Non-Defense Discretionary spending is needed in order to provide significant increases to these programs, we urge you to provide maximum funding to these vital investments as allowed by law.

Programs in the Department of Education

Elementary and Secondary Education

Title I-A (ESSA) Education for the Disadvantaged. Requested: Full authorization of \$16.182B. The quality of a child's education should not be dictated by his or her zip code. Title I grants provide financial assistance to schools and districts that serve students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Despite an increase in the number of students living in poverty, Congress has only provided marginal increases to this program, stopping short of the fully authorized funding level. We urge you to fully fund this critical formula program to help ensure that our nation's vulnerable students have access to a high quality, well-rounded curriculum coupled with the academic, social-emotional, and mental and behavioral health supports needed to support both school and student success.

Title II-A (ESSA) Supporting Effective Instruction. Requested: Full authorization of \$2.295B. Our nation's teachers, principals, and specialized instructional support personnel must have access to high quality, relevant, and job-embedded professional development in order to maintain the provision of evidence-based practices that support student learning and a safe and supportive school climate. We ask that you reject the President's request that this program be eliminated and fund it at its full authorization level.

Title IV-A (ESSA) Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants. Requested: Full Authorization of \$1.6B. Evidence-based efforts to promote: a supportive school environment; student mental health and wellness; and school safety and violence prevention and are directly linked to improved outcomes for students in school and in life. High quality teachers and effective school principals are certainly critical to student success, but students will not thrive if their psychological needs are not met in the school environment. Funding Title IV Part A at its full authorization level will provide states and districts with

needed investments to ensure that every student attends a school with a safe and supportive learning environment. A full authorization would give students more access to desperately needed comprehensive school-based mental health services, including wellness promotion, early identification and intervention, and individualized services as needed. We urge you to reject the President's request that this program be eliminated and fund it at its full authorization level.

Safe Schools National Activities. We ask that you maintain the following language included in the FY19 Appropriations Conference Report: *“Within School Safety National Activities, not more than \$10,000,000 may be for a demonstration program to test and evaluate innovative partnerships between institutions of higher education and States or high-need local educational agencies to train school counselors, social workers, psychologists, or other mental health professionals qualified to provide school-based mental health services, with the goal of expanding the pipeline of these workers into low-income public elementary schools and secondary schools in order to address the shortages.”* The Department of Education has informed our organization that they plan to compete this grant program this spring. While we work on underlying authorization legislation, we urge the committee to adopt this appropriations language again this year so that additional funds may be available. We have a national shortage of school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers. NASP recommends a ratio of 1 school psychologist per 500-700 students, depending on the specific needs of the district. Unfortunately, national data indicate an average ratio of 1 school psychologist per every 1,381 students, with some districts experiencing a ratio as high as 1:4000. With approximately 1 in 5 youth requiring significant mental health supports in order to be successful in school, the need is overwhelming and impossible to meet given the current shortage of mental health professionals. Our allied professionals, including school social workers and school counselors, are facing similarly high ratios. We need school-based mental health professionals trained to address student's behavioral and social needs, improve school climate, and address school safety concerns. We believe it is critical to the students we are serving across the country that the Department of Education connect universities with the highest need districts. Such partnerships will begin to identify innovative solutions to address these critical personnel shortages and improve overall outcomes for schools and students.

Special Education and Rehabilitation Services

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part B, Grants to States. Requested: \$14B. In 1975, through the passage of the now named Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Congress committed to fund 40 percent of the cost of educating students with disabilities. Unfortunately, this commitment has never been fully realized. This lack of funding has impacted the education of students with disabilities. This lack of funding has also caused fiscal challenges for school districts as they ensure the sufficiency of their own budgets. Unfortunately, since 2009, the average federal share per child as a percentage of the national average per pupil expenditure has declined in each year except one. FY2019's projected share per child was about 14% - only slightly above the FY2001 level. While the federal share has declined, the number of students with disabilities has increased by over 25 percent in the last 20 years, further amplifying Congress' broken promise. FY2020 presents a crucial opportunity to begin reversing the trend of a declining federal share of IDEA funding, and we urge you to provide at least a \$1.7 billion increase in IDEA Part B appropriations over FY2019.

State Personnel Development. Requested: Minimum of \$38.6M. We are currently experiencing a shortage of special education teachers and other professionals who provide services to students with disabilities. These grants provide funds to help states recruit and retain qualified professionals, while also supporting the capacity of both general and special education teachers to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

Programs in the Department of Health and Human Services

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Requested \$80M

Garret Lee Smith Memorial Act. Requested \$8.5M. Suicide rates are on the rise. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources, and best practices for professionals. Increased funding would empower Lifeline to bolster call centers nationwide, fortify national back-up call centers, increase chat capabilities, and strengthen infrastructure and administration of Lifeline services. The Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Memorial Act manages two significant youth suicide prevention programs and one resource center. The GLS SPRC builds national capacity for preventing suicide by providing technical assistance, training, and resources to develop suicide prevention strategies, including programs, interventions, and policies.

Project AWARE State Grants Requested \$71M. In order to address the rising rates of depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues among our young people, we must equip our youth - and the adults who work with them - with the skills to recognize the signs of mental illness and connect those in need with critical services. These grants improve a state's ability to address the mental health of our nation's youth and build upon the successful strategies of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative.

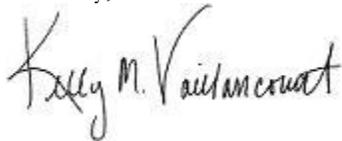
Health Resources & Services Administration

Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET). Requested: \$75M. We are experiencing a critical shortage of mental and behavioral health professionals in our schools and communities. These shortages are especially pronounced in rural areas and for underserved populations. BHWET expands access to mental and behavioral health services by supporting internships and field placements for a variety of mental and behavioral health professionals, including school psychologists.

In addition to these specific asks above, we urge you to adopt language that prohibits federal education funds from being used to pay for firearms or firearms training for educators. Although we believe this was never the intent of the law, the Department of Education has refused to take action on this issue. We believe clear language is needed to prevent districts from using federal taxpayer dollars on such a dangerous and risky proposal. Further, we urge you to again adopt language that clarifies the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can indeed conduct research into gun violence. The issue of gun violence in our communities is a public health crisis and we have a responsibility to fund rigorous research into the causes and solutions of gun violence to prevent unnecessary and tragic deaths (including suicide).

Thank you for your consideration and for your work in ensuring that federal dollars are spent wisely and on programs that will benefit our nation's children and youth. We believe that investments in these programs yield tremendous societal and economic benefits. Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions.

Sincerely,



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CC: House and Senate Appropriations Committee Members