

April \*, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The \*\*\* undersigned organizations – representing the full range of stakeholders supporting the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill (Labor-HHS) – thank you for increasing investments in these important programs for fiscal year (FY) 2020 and urge you to significantly boost the FY 2021 allocations to address vital and on-going needs. The programs and services funded by the Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee have a profound impact on health and well-being, child development, educational and skills attainment, and productivity, yet they have been shortchanged in the appropriations process over the last decade. The bill has lost almost \$16 billion in purchasing power over the last decade; it would take an allocation of \$199 billion just to return to the FY 2010 level in inflation-adjusted dollars.

Even in years when non-defense discretionary funding increased, the Subcommittee's allocation remained flat or received only a small share of the increase even though it is the largest non-defense bill. Most recently, for FY 2020 the bill received just a 2.8 percent increase in funding when overall non-defense discretionary funding increased by 4.1 percent, leaving important services and activities underfunded by billions of dollars.

We recognize the constraints posed by the tight cap on non-defense discretionary spending but urge you to keep in mind the importance of funding the long-standing needs addressed by the Labor-HHS-Education bill. Its programs strengthen the nation by improving Americans' lives and meeting basic needs for a broad range of constituencies. The effects of chronic underfunding have impacted programs that support education, public health, health research, job training, and social services. The effects include:

- Serving 1.5 million fewer low-income people through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) in 2018 than in 2010, despite growing need, because funding was reduced from \$5.1 billion to \$3.7 billion over this period (and cut [38 percent](#) from FY 2010 to FY 2020, adjusted for inflation).
- Eroding the public health infrastructure and workforce, limiting our ability to respond to public health crises and monitor health trends for new and emerging threats.
- Hindering efforts to raise overall student achievement, close troubling achievement gaps, and increase high school graduation rates, college affordability, and college completion.

- Leaving far too many low-income children without access to high quality preschool and other early learning opportunities.
- Hindering people's access to the skills, training, and education necessary to fill jobs at the backbone of our economy and businesses' efforts to fill the jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- Preventing almost one million citizens from accessing the critical workforce and job training services that Congress overwhelmingly authorized in 2014. Funds for adult and youth training under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act were cut by more than [17 percent](#) over the past decade, and the YouthBuild program was cut by 23 percent.
- Ignoring the needs of individuals who find themselves without a high school credential and who need a pathway back to education, employment and active citizenship.
- Failing to keep pace with growing child welfare needs, especially as communities grapple with the destructive impact of substance use disorders on families. Child welfare services funding, for example, was cut more than [20 percent](#) from FY 2010 to FY 2020.

Without a substantial increase in the Subcommittee's allocation, it will be virtually impossible to meaningfully expand investments in important initiatives such as public health emergency preparedness and infectious disease surveillance, supporting the Every Student Succeeds Act, continuing to improve college affordability and completion, or achieving the intended innovation of the bipartisan Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act.

We are appreciative of Congress's recent additional funding for Labor-HHS agencies and programs to support efforts to combat COVID-19 and acknowledge that supplemental funding is an important down-payment towards meeting immediate needs. However, we believe that the long-term impact of COVID-19 and the outcomes of future pandemics will be catastrophic if we do not provide robust investments through annual appropriations. Therefore, we urge you to commit to improving the lives of Americans by significantly boosting the allocation for the Labor-HHS-Education bill for FY 2021 to support needed services for the American public.

If you have questions about this letter, please contact:

- Sheryl Cohen, Committee for Education Funding ([cohen@cef.org](mailto:cohen@cef.org))
- Angela Ostrom, Coalition for Health Funding ([aostrom@dc--crd.com](mailto:aostrom@dc--crd.com));
- Katie Spiker, Campaign to Invest in America's Workforce ([KatieS@nationalskillscoalition.org](mailto:KatieS@nationalskillscoalition.org)); or
- Deborah Weinstein, Coalition on Human Needs ([dweinstein@chn.org](mailto:dweinstein@chn.org))

Sincerely,

Cc: Chairs and Ranking Members, House and Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations  
Subcommittees