

March XX, 2023

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

The XXX undersigned organizations—representing the full range of stakeholders supporting the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), and Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill—thank you for your leadership in supporting families and communities. We urge you to build on the previous fiscal year (FY) investment of \$226.8 billion by increasing the FY 2024 allocation for the Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee to a level that ensures robust and sustained investments so that these programs can meet vital needs. Additionally, we call on you to ensure that non-defense discretionary (NDD) funding is not cut or capped in a manner that cuts spending in the FY 2024 appropriations process.

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 since spending caps were enacted in 2011. We recommend an allocation that builds upon the FY 2023 investment to address the gaps created from years of underfunding these essential programs. The need for these key investments has only grown over time, leaving important services and activities underfunded by billions of dollars. Any proposals to cut total FY 2024 funding or to cap NDD funding in a manner that cuts spending for FY2024 or future fiscal years will further undermine the future strength, economic development, and security of our nation.

While Congress enacted COVID-19 emergency funding to address urgent needs caused by the pandemic on a short-term basis, this pandemic supplemental funding does not replace the need for ongoing increases to base appropriations for services to fulfill the goals of the bill's programs. We need sustained annual increases across the Labor-HHS-Education programs to address long-standing needs that existed before the pandemic, and these increases cannot come at the expense of other programs within the bill or other NDD programs. The programs in the Labor-HHS-Education bill 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:

- The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) finally grew in FY 2023, after having been cut [40.6 percent](#) from FY 2010 to FY 2022, adjusted for inflation. Growth is essential, with average households expected to pay [12.7 percent more](#) for heat this winter, and nearly [55 percent](#) of people with household incomes of \$25,000 or less reporting they had to reduce or forego basic household expenses to pay their energy bills.
- Eroding the public health and research infrastructure and workforce, limiting our ability to address disease prevention, respond to future health crises, and monitor ongoing health trends for new and emerging threats.
- Hindering efforts to address learning loss and opportunity gaps created by the pandemic, to raise student achievement, and to 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.

- Providing child care to only one in nine eligible children under age 6, with child care providers paid so little that one in four early childhood educators take second jobs to make ends meet.
- Hindering workers' access to the skills, training, and education necessary to access the jobs for which employers are currently hiring.
- Preventing almost one million people from accessing the critical workforce and job training services that Congress overwhelmingly authorized in 2014. The U.S. invests less than every other industrialized country in active labor market policy, except for Mexico and Chile, and would need to invest \$80 billion annually just to reach the median of our international peers.
- Ignoring the needs of individuals who find themselves without a high school credential and who need a pathway back to education, employment, and full participation in their communities.
- Providing inadequate resources to mitigate the worsening substance use disorder crisis in communities throughout the country.
- While starting to reverse Maternal and Child Health Block Grant funding losses, FY 2023 funding remains about 10 percent below the levels in FY 2010 when taking inflation into account.
- 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 flat-funded in FY 2023, leaving it more than [27 percent](#) below the FY 2010 level, adjusted for inflation.

We urge you to commit to improving the lives of Americans by boosting the allocation for the Labor-HHS-Education bill for FY 2024 to provide needed services for the American public while ensuring continued support for NDD programs. If you have questions about this letter, please contact:

- Sarah Abernathy, Committee for Education Funding (abernathy@cef.org);
- Erin Will Morton, Coalition for Health Funding (emorton@dc-crd.com);
- Megan Evans, Campaign to Invest in America's Workforce (MeganE@nationalskillscoalition.org);
or
- Deborah Weinstein, Coalition on Human Needs (dweinstein@chn.org).