THE CONTINUED NEED FOR APPROPRIATIONS GUARDRAILS

The Trump Administration has undertaken unprecedented and radical actions to interfere with and misdirect federal funding, often ignoring legality or Congressional intent. Among myriad examples, the Administration has:

- **Illegally impounded funds – refusing to spend them:** For example, the administration held back tens of millions for the Minority Business Development Agency, causing the funds to expire unused, and has continued to illegally withhold support for community banks and other lending institutions (known as CDFIs) despite bipartisan pushback from Congress.
- **Canceled projects based on political vendettas:** For example, the administration sought to illegally cancel billions in support for clean energy projects based on whether the project was in a state that voted for President Trump in 2024 and to illegally freeze billions for child care and other social services only in states with Democratic governors.
- **Dismantled agencies:** Moved to illegally shift the Department of Education's responsibilities to other agencies while reducing its staff by over 40 percent.

In the face of the Trump Administration's weaponization of federal funding and attack on the Congressional power of the purse, it is not enough to merely secure sufficient funding levels for critical programs. Congress must also provide protections in appropriations legislation that help ensure the funding is not interfered with — or makes it easier for recipients to fight the Administration's abuses in court.

Advocates seeking funding for critical programs should urge that funding bills include guardrails that provide greater assurance that the money Congress provides will reach the communities it is intended to assist quickly and without political interference, such as:

- Requiring that funding is provided by particular deadlines, to avoid delays in releasing funds
- Ensuring that receipt of funds is free from unrelated policy commitments, requirements, or certifications that were not included in past years
- Requesting greater public transparency on the status of funds throughout the year
- Protecting federal staff who operate the programs from mass layoffs, relocations, re-organizations, or being stripped of their merit protections to avoid disruptions in the *administration* of critical programs.

Advocates should ask Congress that, to the greatest extent possible, **protections be provided on a broad basis** — covering many programs, rather than just particular ones — since the Trump Administration may unexpectedly target programs in the future that it has not interfered with in the recent past.