



# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

1030 15th St., Suite 150, Washington, D.C. 20005 | 1029 J Street, Suite 500, Sacramento, CA 95814  
tel 855.525.8110 | web www.nass.us

July 25, 2017

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
United States Senate  
260 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
United States Senate  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

The National Association of School Superintendents helps district leaders promote educational equity and strengthen public education. Superintendents work every day to help students graduate ready for later academic, career and life success. Achieving that vision for all learners, however, will require an unwavering local, state, and federal partnership, including a shared and stable commitment to helping schools serve the students and families with the greatest financial, developmental, learning, and other needs.

As you prepare the fiscal year 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies spending bill, NASS encourages you to invest in strengthening the entire continuum of learning, beginning with early childhood programs and continuing through higher education and work. Specifically, we encourage you prioritize the following important investments that district leaders and their teams depend on to help their students succeed.

NASS welcomed Congress's decision to use the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to restore greater judgment and control to district leaders, while also continuing federal law's emphasis on encouraging high standards, robust accountability, and promoting transparency and community engagement. Meeting this high bar will require significant resources, beginning with greater funding for **ESSA's foundational formula investments - Title I and II** – while also supporting the law's other programs, including the versatile **Student Support and Academic Enrichment** block grant. Congress agreed, on a bipartisan basis, to use ESSA to reduce the number of federal K-12 programs and instead focus on a smaller number of high priority initiatives. Appropriators should honor that decision by fully funding the remaining programs.

Given the importance of ESSA's formula programs, we are deeply concerned about the House Appropriations Committee's decision to eliminate funding for **ESSA Title II**. High functioning schools begin with great teachers and school leaders. Local, state, and federal policies should prioritize and support the professionals serving the nation's students, including addressing the teacher shortages affecting many school districts. Strengthening the existing educator workforce and recruiting new talent to the professions will require policies and investments

that support – not hinder – teachers’ work, especially including the teachers that serve in high poverty communities. Abandoning, or even significantly decreasing, Title II is step in the wrong direction.

Federal, State and local leaders must also assume greater shared responsibility for ensuring more children arrive for kindergarten ready for success. Far too many low-income students begin elementary school developmentally and academically behind their higher income peers. Research shows that **high quality early learning opportunities** can help to close this preparedness gap and many district leaders are working to expand the preschool opportunities available in their communities. They cannot, however, tackle this challenge alone. NASS appreciates the House Appropriations Committee’s commitment to early learning programs, and urge you to provide the investments required to help school districts expand high quality preschool opportunities. Specifically, we encourage you to increase funding for ESSA’s Preschool Development Grants, Head Start, and Early Head Start.

NASS also urges you to provide additional funding for students with disabilities. Congress must continue to increase funding for the **IDEA State Grants** formula program, which provides resources to school districts to help ensure students with disabilities receive the rich educational opportunities they deserve. The federal investment in students with disabilities is simply insufficient and must be increased over time. This important funding should include increases for IDEA’s programs for infants and toddlers, which can help allay later special education costs that are overwhelming far too many school districts. NASS urges the Senate follow the House Appropriations Committee’s decision to increase IDEA funding.

Thank you for carefully considering our fiscal year 2018 recommendations. We appreciate your service to the nation’s students and would be pleased to respond to any questions you have about NASS or how our members use these federal programs to level the playing field for students and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Tom Armelino".

Thomas V. Armelino  
Executive Director