



April 7, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Room S128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Room S128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
Room H-305, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Committee  
Room H-305, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey,

As you continue consideration of fiscal year 2017 funding levels and begin to prepare the fiscal year 2018 Appropriations bills, the America Forward Coalition urges you to include funding for the programs identified below that spur innovation, reward results, and catalyze cross-sector partnerships to propel America forward.

The America Forward Coalition is a network of more than 70 social entrepreneur organizations that champion innovative, effective, and efficient solutions to our country's most pressing social problems. Our Coalition members are achieving measurable outcomes in more than 14,500 communities nationwide, touching the lives of 8 million Americans each year, and driving progress in education, workforce development, early learning, poverty alleviation, public health, pay for success, social innovation, national service, and criminal justice reform. Since 2007, America Forward's community of entrepreneurs has played a leading role in driving the national dialogue on social innovation and advocating for lasting policy change.

Our Coalition organizations are working in communities across the country and believe that non-defense discretionary funding is essential to economic recovery and growth, adequate public health response, resources for our nation's schools and colleges, needed programming to help skill-up our workforce, activities for addressing our eroding infrastructure, and for ensuring our national security. These programs have already been cut in past budget years, and despite assertions about the lack of evidence to support their impact, there are many positive examples of the outcomes achieved from investments in:

- Early childhood/Early learning education
- After and summer school programming
- Work study opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students
- Workforce development and job training
- National service

We strongly support a refocusing of government funding to what works. To do this, however, we need to support funding for innovation and evaluation, the use of tiered-evidence approaches to target federal funding to programs that have greater evidence of effectiveness, and the inclusion of performance-based funding provisions to build the evidence base to ensure we know what is working and what does



not before making drastic cuts to important programs that directly impact millions of children, youth and adults across this country.

We are eager to work with you to advance the policies outlined in this letter and urge you to include and prioritize the following programs in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies, Financial Services and General Government, and Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies bills for fiscal year 2017 and 2018.

### **Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies**

#### ***Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services***

- **\$1.16 billion for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers**, to support effective extended learning and enrichment opportunities that are connected to content covered during the school day through effective community-school partnerships.
- **\$350 million for the Charter Schools Program** to support high-quality charter schools that break the mold of the status quo and create new solutions to meet critical needs.
- **\$120 million for the Education, Innovation, and Research (EIR)** to increase the number of high-quality applications to build evidence of effectiveness and to demonstrate the feasibility of scaling effective interventions. If FY17 funding levels are finalized as a continuing resolution, please include language directing the U.S. Department of Education to implement the EIR program, as newly authorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
- **\$9.6 billion for Head Start** to increase the number of children attending Head Start for a full school day and a full school year.
- **\$100 million for a new or re-envisioned Innovation in Higher Education grant program** to encourage innovation in higher education that is necessary to tackle and improve college persistence and completion rates, increase the efficiency and productivity of higher education, build evidence of what works, and scale up proven strategies.
- **\$13.6 billion for IDEA** to serve students with disabilities.
- **\$15 million to continue to support and maintain initiatives at the Institute of Education Sciences** that will collect, analyze, and release data and evaluation studies, for internal users and the public, to answer pressing education questions.
- **\$350 million for Preschool Development Grants** to support significant national investments necessary to ensure that all young people have access to a high-quality education and the opportunity to succeed.
- **\$30 million for the School Leader Recruitment and Support Program** to seed models of promising principal preparation programs, scale preparation programs with results, and support effective professional development for school leaders in the field.
- **\$190 million for the LEARN Literacy Grant** program to advance literacy skills for students from birth through grade 12.
- **\$1.6 billion for Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants** to support locally designed efforts to provide students with well-rounded educational experiences, safe and healthy learning environments, and personalized instruction, including through the effective use of technology.
- **\$100 million for the Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) Grant Program** to recruit and develop teachers, principals, or other school leaders.
- **\$2.35 billion for State flexibility to identify and implement high-quality professional development programming**, including the option to set aside 3 percent of their funding to support activities designed specifically for school leaders.

- **Level funding for student financial aid assistance, Pell grants (\$22.5 billion), Federal Supplement Education Opportunity grants (\$733 million), and Federal work study (\$989 million),** to ensure students can earn a post-secondary credential without taking on more debt than they can afford and provide enough flexibility to meet unique needs that may arise throughout a student's term as well as provide opportunities for students to link learning to experience.

#### ***Department of Labor***

- **\$2 billion for an Apprenticeship Training Fund** to be funded over five years in an effort to double the number of registered apprenticeships by helping more employers provide high-quality on-the-job training through apprenticeship and to support states and localities with resources to assist employers in creating and expanding apprenticeships.
- **\$500 million for the creation of a Workforce Data Science and Innovation Fund** to address the quality of workforce related data in order to improve training programs and consumer choice.
- **\$1.33 billion for major formula funds under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA),** including the adult, youth, and dislocated worker funding streams and **\$3.2 million for WIOA technical assistance** to provide resources to support state implementation of WIOA.
- **\$102.5 million for YouthBuild** grants that are used to engage low-income 16-24 year olds in a comprehensive full-time education, job training, and community service program in which students earn their GED or HSD while learning job skills by building affordable green housing under skilled supervision, or through providing health or technology services in their communities.

#### ***General Provisions- Departments of Labor and Education***

- **Continued authority for Performance Partnership Pilots** to award up to 10 new pilots that allow States, tribes and localities to blend certain discretionary funding in order to improve education, employment and other key outcomes for vulnerable youth.

#### ***Corporation for National and Community Service***

- **\$1.47 billion for the Corporation for National and Community Service** to ensure AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members are able to continue to deliver high-impact, cost-effective, locally-determined services in communities and continue to fuel the implementation of innovative programs in a variety of fields.
- **\$70 million for the Social Innovation Fund** to test promising new approaches to major social challenges and to expand evidence-based programs that demonstrate measurable outcomes. This includes the allowable use of up to **20 percent of funds for Pay for Success projects.**

#### **Financial Services and General Government**

- **Support the continued work of the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking** championed by Speaker Ryan and Senator Murray, this Commission was convened in 2016 and is actively engaged in making recommendations for how to use current administrative data and how to make additional administrative data available for evaluation by Federal and outside researchers.
- **\$300 million for Pay for Success Incentive Fund at Department of Treasury** to help state and local governments implement Pay for Success programs with philanthropies, nonprofits, and other nongovernmental organizations.

#### **Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies**

- **\$15 million for the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program** to support data-driven, comprehensive, and community-oriented strategies to reduce crime, spur revitalization, and build community-police collaboration.
- **\$120 million for the Second Chance Act Program** to provide grants to establish and expand adult and juvenile offender reentry programs to reduce recidivism and help those exiting the justice



system to rejoin their communities and lead productive lives, including **\$20 million for Pay for Success** projects to provide awards for supporting housing using performance-based metrics.

- **\$30 million for the Justice Reinvestment Initiative** to support states and localities in using a data-driven approach to improve public safety, reduce corrections spending, and to reinvest savings in effective strategies to decrease crime.

The America Forward Coalition respectfully requests that the above programs be included at the identified levels in final fiscal year 2017 funding level negotiations and in your fiscal year 2018 Appropriations bills. We recognize the many difficult choices your Committees face and thank you for ongoing support for policies that help communities find and test new ways of tackling seemingly intractable problems, using and building evidence to measurably improve people's lives. We look forward to working with you to advance these important issues in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

Members of the America Forward Coalition