

April 6, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, Education, and  
Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, Education, and  
Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran, Ranking Member Leahy, Chairman Blunt, & Ranking Member Murray:

We, the undersigned Future Ready Schools® (FRS) superintendents, write to request that full funding be provided for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (SSAEGs) under Title IV, Part A, of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017. Initially authorized at \$1.65 billion for FY 2017, this amount will ensure funding for programs that support three areas of student learning: (1) a well-rounded education, (2) a safe and healthy school climate, and (3) the effective use of schoolwide technology.

FRS helps district leaders plan and implement personalized, research-based digital learning strategies that prepare students for success in college and a career. As the FRS initiative has shown, the effective integration of technology in the classroom is essential for producing globally competitive students with a twenty-first-century skillset. FRS districts understand that technology, when implemented properly, can produce significant gains in academic achievement and boost engagement, particularly for traditionally underserved students and their communities.

However, the use of technology in the classroom is only effective when schools and educators are provided with appropriate supports for implementation. This includes funding for professional development opportunities, investing in schools' technological capacity and infrastructure, and combatting the "digital divide" between students from low-income families and their more affluent peers. The SSAEG program is key in this process.

Under ESSA, using technology to improve the digital learning experience is only one of three funding priorities the SSAEG program was created to address. Under SSAEG, if districts receive less than \$30,000, they can choose to allocate the entire grant to one of the aforementioned three categories of student learning. Failure to authorize SSAEG at the full amount could reduce funding nationwide and place districts in a compromising position of having to choose between

investing in equally important needs, such as Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate course work or technology-driven professional development.

Forcing districts to sacrifice funding in any of the three areas of student learning undermines the intent, efficacy, and flexibility of this important grant program. Authorizing SSAEG at its full level will reaffirm the commitment made under ESSA to provide students, educators, and communities with quality educational experiences. As superintendents, we recognize that the most meaningful student experiences will result from SSAEG funding that is sufficient enough to allow districts to prioritize digital learning alongside other educational initiatives supported by the SSAEG program.

In order to create classrooms where all students have access to technology and the learning opportunities it affords, please appropriate the full \$1.65 billion authorized level for the Title IV SSAEGs for FY 2017. On behalf of the students, parents, and educators that we represent, thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

**Alabama**

Kathy Murphy  
Superintendent  
Hoover City Schools  
Alabama

**Alaska**

Eric Gebhart  
Superintendent  
Nenana City School District  
Alaska

**Arizona**

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Baboquivari Unified School District  
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California

Mary Sieu  
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ABC Unified School District  
California

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Superintendent-Principal  
Knights Ferry Elementary School District  
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Superintendent  
John Swett Unified School District  
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Ron Williams  
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Mountain Board of Cooperative Educational  
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