Wednesday, February 12, 2014

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Member of Congress:

The undersigned education stakeholders request that you sign the “Dear Colleague” letter being circulated by Reps. Marcia Fudge and Judy Chu that asks President Obama to increase funding for Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in his FY 2015 budget proposal.

Title I is the nation’s flagship education program. It is designed to ensure that critical federal education dollars reach those students in greatest need—those living in communities with the highest levels of poverty. Title I is a natural complement to and substantial cornerstone of any equity or long-term economic agenda.

Title I is a program that is working: The long-term achievement gap, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, is narrowing. But the recent confluence of inflation, sequestration and budget reductions significantly undermine its potential and threaten to erase academic and learning gains.

Along with these cuts, the nation has witnessed an increased need for Title I, as the number of public school students in poverty has increased dramatically over the past decade. Yet, despite the program’s success, even pre-sequestration funding levels left Title I underfunded. A recent estimate suggests that the cost to serve all eligible students would exceed $50 billion, and a 2013 analysis, done by former Congressional Research Service analyst Wayne Riddle, stated that the actual purchasing power of Title I (adjusted for inflation using 1966 dollars) was only $1.4 billion.

The effectiveness of Title I hinges on the availability of funding to ensure that high-quality teaching, curriculum materials, specialized instructional and other supports reach a critical mass of the target population. We believe that sustained, long-term concentration of federal resources in those districts with the greatest need is the best approach to addressing equity and education. It is time to return the focus of limited federal education dollars to the program that is designed to improve equality and access to high-quality education.

The undersigned groups, representing education stakeholders deeply invested in and committed to ensuring equitable education opportunities for all students, strongly urge you to sign the “Dear Colleague” letter being circulated by Reps. Fudge and Chu. To sign, please contact Clifton Williams in Rep. Fudge’s office at Clifton.williams@mail.house.gov or 202-225-7032, or Joleen C. Rivera in Rep. Chu’s office at Joleen.Rivera@mail.house.gov or 202-225-5464.
Sincerely,

AASA: The School Superintendents Association
American Federation of Teachers
American School Counselor Association
Association of Educational Service Agencies
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of the Great City Schools
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Education Association
National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition
National Rural Education Association
National School Boards Association
National Title I Association