June 23, 2015

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education Appropriations Subcommittee
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Labors, Health and Human Services,
Education Appropriations Subcommittee
2467 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education Appropriations Subcommittee
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rose DeLauro
Ranking Member
Labors, Health and Human Services,
Education Appropriations Subcommittee
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Blunt and Cole and Ranking Members Murray and DeLauro:

On behalf of the nation’s 115,500 elementary, middle, and high school principals, assistant principals, and other school leaders, the American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA), National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), and New Leaders urge you to continue funding the School Leadership Program in the Fiscal Year 2016 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill.

There is no room for debate when it comes to investing in our children through high-quality education programs, and we must support our nation’s educators to help students reach their greatest potential. While leading research substantiates that teachers have the greatest influence on student achievement, many studies validate the critical role of the principal. Principals are recognized for their ability to influence a variety of factors that positively affect schools. They indirectly affect student outcomes by recognizing and supporting teachers, but they also directly influence schools by creating high-functioning learning environments. The evidence about successful schools is clear: A great teacher makes a great classroom, but only a principal can lead a school’s success and sustain long-term improvements.

Finding, encouraging, and supporting aspiring principals is critical, as today’s principals are under tremendous pressure to implement complex reforms designed to improve instructional practices. That is why NASSP, NAESP, AFSA, and New Leaders are particularly concerned with the removal of the School Leadership Program in the Fiscal Year 2016 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill that was approved by the House Appropriations Subcommittee on
June 16. The School Leadership Program is the only federal program dedicated to recruiting, mentoring, and training principals and assistant principals to serve in high-need schools. Eliminating this program will hamstring efforts to recruit, train, and develop effective school leaders to implement new federal, state, and local requirements. At a minimum, we urge you to level fund this program at $16.4 million in FY16.

We recognize the challenges you face in crafting an appropriations bill, however, we hope you will consider the under-investment that education has received in previous years and the detrimental effect a continued lack of investment will have for our nation’s young people, our economy, and our global competitiveness. As a result, we urge you to increase spending for nondefense discretionary (NDD) programs by removing the sequester level cap, which would enable a stronger investment in education within this spending package. Thank you for your consideration of our requests, and we hope we can count on your support to fund these critical investments in our nation’s future.

Sincerely,

JoAnn D. Bartoletti
Executive Director, NASSP

Gail Connelly
Executive Director, NAESP

Diann Woodard
President, AFSA

Jean Desravines
Chief Executive Officer, New Leaders