June 1, 2004

The Honorable Ralph Regula, Chairman  The Honorable David Obey, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services and Education  Human Services and Education
Washington, DC  20515   Washington, DC  20515

Dear Chairman Regula and Ranking Member Obey:

As you prepare to deliberate the FY2005 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations, the undersigned organizations respectfully request that you increase funding for the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program (ESSCP). In FY2003, 60 school districts in 26 states received ESSCP grants. We are hopeful that the Subcommittee will provide sufficient funding to allow middle and high, as well as elementary, schools to benefit from this program. ESSCP, currently funded at $33.8 million, provides funds only for elementary schools until the statutory trigger of $40 million has been met. Funds beyond $40 million, the base amount for elementary programs, may then be used in middle and high schools.

The Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program is intended to provide schools with the necessary resources to establish and enhance school counseling programs. ESSCP allows school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, child and adolescent psychiatrists, and other qualified psychologists to work together to establish a comprehensive counseling program that supports students by addressing barriers to academic success.

The need for counseling services at both the elementary and secondary school levels is clear. Counseling professionals guide students in academic, social and emotional, and career development, so that they will achieve success and be prepared for fulfilling lives as responsible members of society. Students’ academic achievement is the cornerstone of the No Child Left Behind Act, and the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program is an important component in efforts to reach that goal.

Additionally, counseling professionals are at the forefront of efforts to help students cope with school violence and heightened threats of terrorism, as well as the possible ongoing mental health effects of such events. These personnel work to provide a positive school climate that results in decreased disciplinary referrals and that teaches mutual respect and improves self-esteem.

Congress must fulfill its commitment to ensuring students’ success and well being by sufficiently funding the ESSCP. We look forward to working with you on this important initiative and appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Counseling Association
American Psychological Association
American School Counselor Association
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
School Social Work Association of America