The undersigned national and state organizations write to request that the Committee provide full funding for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grant program, found under Title IV, Part A of the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

The SSAE grant program, authorized at $1.6 billion for fiscal year 2019 (FY 2019), supports three important education areas: 1) safe and healthy students activities, such as providing comprehensive mental and behavioral health services to students and implementing gun violence prevention programs; 2) increasing student access to a well-rounded education, such as: STEM; computer science and accelerated learning courses; physical education; the arts; music; foreign languages; college and career counseling; effective school library programs; and, 3) providing students with access to technology and digital materials and educators with technology professional development opportunities.

We are grateful that Congress recognized the importance of Title IV-A and provided $1.1 billion in FY 2018 and strongly urge Congress to fully fund the SSAE program in FY 2019. This will provide districts enough funds and flexibility to make meaningful investments in priority program areas determined by their needs assessments. Additionally, this funding level obviates the need for a competitive option and allows the flexible block grant to operate as Congress intended, as a formula grant that benefits all districts equitably.

On behalf of the millions of students, parents and educators that we collectively represent, we urge you to please appropriate full funding in FY 2019 for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant program under Title IV-A of ESSA and allow states and districts to make meaningful investments in programs that are critical to student success.

Sincerely,