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Joel Packer,
Executive Director
Committee for Education Funding



February 8, 2011

Dear Appropriations Committee Member:

The Committee for Education Funding (CEF), a coalition of 85 education associations and institutions from preschool to postgraduate education, is writing to express our strong opposition to the proposed Fiscal Year 2011 subcommittee 302(b) allocations.

We would like to clarify that the proposed cut to the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee is much larger than it appears. The table released on February 3 by the Committee shows Labor-HHS-ED cut by \$6.565 billion or 4 percent below FY 10. However, that number is very deceptive because the FY 10 base used for comparison is not the FY 11 current CR level, which includes \$5.667 billion to pay off the Pell Grant shortfall.

Measured relative to the CR (FY 2010 enacted plus funding for the Pell shortfall), the cut would be \$12.33 billion or 7.3 percent. A cut to education of 7.3% or \$5.1 billion, would have a devastating impact on students, schools, states and colleges. If the CR funding to maintain the current Pell maximum award of \$5,550 were eliminated, almost nine million students' awards would be cut by as much as \$880. For many, such a cut would disrupt or derail their postsecondary education.

Cuts of this magnitude would completely reverse progress on improving student achievement, closing achievement gaps and increasing high school graduation, postsecondary education attendance and college completion rates.

In addition, such cuts would come at a time when schools and colleges are facing both the termination of ARRA funds and deep cuts in state aid due to unprecedented and continuing state budget gaps that will result in substantial reductions and layoffs at all levels of education. In fact, since January 2010, the combined number of state and local government education employees dropped by over 81,000 positions.

According to the National Association of State Budget Officers, "Fiscal 2011 is expected to be another difficult fiscal year for states. Spending and revenue is unlikely to return to pre-recession levels for at least several years in many states." The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has found that since the recession began "at least 34 states and the District of Columbia are cutting aid to K-12 schools and various education programs" and "at least 43 states have cut assistance to public colleges and universities, resulting in reductions in faculty and staff in addition to tuition increases."

At the same time teachers, schools, colleges and students are coping with layoffs, larger class sizes, narrowing of the curriculum, elimination of after-school programs, and rising tuition due to state budget cuts, enrollments are rising and more students need extra services. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, public school enrollment is projected to increase by 8 percent and higher education enrollment by 9 percent between 2009 and 2018.

Schools also face the challenge of educating more students with special needs. As an example, the percentage of students living in families below the poverty level has increased from 16 percent in 2000 to 21 percent in 2010.

One of the best ways to create jobs and improve our economy and global competitiveness is through investments in education. As one example, individuals with less than a high school diploma currently have an unemployment rate more than three times that of those with a bachelor's degree or higher (14.2% v. 4.2%).

The report of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform stated, "...we must invest in education, infrastructure, and high-value research and development to help our economy grow, keep us globally competitive, and make it easier for businesses to create jobs."

In addition, the American public opposes education cuts. According to a January 26th Gallup poll, by a more than 2-1 margin Americans oppose cutting federal funding for education. A larger percentage opposed cutting education than opposed cutting any other program area. In a *CNN* poll conducted January 21-23, by a 3-1 margin (75%-25%), the public thought it was more important to prevent education programs from being significantly cut than reducing the federal budget deficit. Finally, in a January 15-19 *CBS/NY Times* poll, only 8% of the public supported cutting federal funding for education – again the lowest support for cuts among all other programs areas asked about.

For the sake of our schools, colleges and students, as well as America's future, we urge you to reject the proposed 302(b) allocations.

Sincerely,



Abigail Evans
President



Joel Packer
Executive Director