COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION FUNDING

April 30, 2015

Dear Representative:

The Committee for Education Funding (CEF), a coalition of 117 national education associations and institutions spanning early learning to postgraduate education, **writes to express our strong opposition to S. Con. Res. 11, the conference report on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Budget Resolution.**

This budget will cause irreparable harm to children, students, schools, libraries, museums and colleges and will undermine job creation, economic growth and global competitiveness by:

- *Locking in the FY 2016 sequester level cap for nondefense discretionary (NDD) spending.* Since the FY 2016 sequester cap is virtually the same as the FY 2015 cap, failing to raise it will make it virtually impossible to provide needed investments in education from early learning through higher education. At the same time, it adds $38 billion for defense spending through the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) fund.

- *Drastically cutting funding for NDD programs below the sequester caps starting in FY 2017.* It slashes NDD spending by $496 billion (-9.9%) over nine years. While cutting NDD spending the budget conference report increases defense spending by $58 billion above the caps between FY 2017 and FY 2025 and increases OCO by $187 billion above the president's budget, violating the principle established in the Budget Control Act and the Bipartisan Budget Act that defense and nondefense spending should be treated with parity. Indeed, the president of the Aerospace Industries Association said in May 2014, "the aerospace and defense industry knows the education, health, job training, and research programs that NDD-United champions in addition to benefitting society, bolster our industrial base."

- *Slashing mandatory funding for Function 500 (Education, Training, Employment and Social Services) by $162.1 billion over ten years*. While the conference report itself doesn't specify the details of that cut, it equals the following assumptions:
    - Elimination of $84.6 billion in mandatory Pell funding, which further assumes the maximum grant will be frozen at the current level and be fully funded on the discretionary side (which is already deeply cut every year starting in FY 2017). That will likely result in cutting the Pell maximum award from $5,775 to $4,860 – a cut of $915 or 15.8 percent.
    - Increasing student indebtedness by $62 billion by eliminating the in-school interest subsidy for need-based student loans, restricting income-based repayment options, and eliminating public service loan forgiveness. For an

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undergraduate student who borrows the maximum $23,000, his/her debt will increase by $4,900 (+16%) over 10 years.

While the Budget adheres to the NDD cap for FY 2016, in FY 2017 alone it cuts NDD spending by $26 billion (-5.2%) below the sequester level. It then deepens these cuts for the succeeding eight years, so that the level of funding in FY 2025 would be 14 percent below the sequester level.

If these discretionary cuts were applied equally to all agencies, the Department of Education would be cut by $3.49 billion in FY 2017 and Head Start in HHS by an additional $421 million.

The cuts to NDD programs may be even worse, since the budget assumes the shift of $7 billion in Pell grant mandatory funding in FY 2017 to this drastically reduced NDD pool of funds. Thus it will result in substantial cuts to critical programs including Title I aid to high-poverty schools; IDEA funds for students with disabilities; Impact Aid; teacher quality grants; after-school programs; magnet school aid; English Language Acquisition grants; career, technical and adult education; campus-based student aid; aid to minority-serving institutions; TRIO and GEAR UP.

These unprecedented and senseless cuts will:

- move our nation backwards in efforts to close achievement gaps, improve overall student success, and increase high school graduation, college access and college completion rates;
- make postsecondary education more expensive for low- and middle-income families; and
- stifle innovation by cuts to scientific research.

The need to increase the federal investment in education has never been greater. Jobs and the economy are directly linked to and enhanced by such investments. Both unemployment rates and lifetime earnings are closely connected to levels of education attainment.

Solving our nation's fiscal situation and reducing the debt can't and won't happen simply by slashing education and other nondefense discretionary spending. **We urge you to reject S. Con. Res 11 and instead adopt a Budget Resolution that invests in education and our nation's future.**

Sincerely,

Noelle Ellerson

Joel Packer

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President

Joel Packer
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