

SAMPLE LETTER TO YOUR U.S. SENATORS AND U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES MEMBER ON TRUMP PROPOSED 2018 BUDGET

Dear NAME OF YOUR CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVE:

I support quality public education. However, the Trump Administration's first full budget proposal, released in May, reflects a narrow and misguided view of education priorities. The budget proposal would slash \$9.2 billion, or 13.5 percent, of funding for the Department of Education for Fiscal Year 2018.

Title 1 funding for disadvantaged students was cut by \$578 million and special education funding was cut by over \$110 million. Title II funding to support teacher professional development was eliminated entirely, as was funding to support literacy programs for high-need students and after school programs. Even the new Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant program, which was created under ESSA to support a well-rounded education for students, a safe and healthy school climate, and the effective use of technology was eliminated from the budget.

One of the very few programs to see an increase under the Trump Administration's proposed budget is a program to start new charter schools or expand and replicate existing high-performing charter schools. This program received an increase of nearly 50 percent. Trump also proposed \$1 billion to create a new program to support public school choice, called the Furthering Options for Children to Unlock Success, or FOCUS, grants. FOCUS grants would be awarded to school districts that allow federal, state, and local funds to follow students to a public school of their choice. Disadvantaged students would be provided with more funding on a per-pupil basis than other students. The NAACP opposed "portability" during ESEA reauthorization in 2015 **and we oppose it now** because it undermines already underfunded school districts and provides public funding to many schools that lack the same accountability and transparency required of traditional public schools.

Further, a program intended to support innovation and research received a \$250 million increase in funding to award scholarships to students from low-income families to attend a private school of their choice. We also oppose public funding of vouchers to attend private schools. Please **reject** the \$1.5 billion for "school choice" which the President referred to as a "down payment" on his campaign goal of spending \$20 billion on public and private school choice.

Finally, in your oversight capacity, please demand that U.S. Department of Education Secretary DeVos enforce federal anti-discrimination protections (*e.g.*, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act) for students in schools that receive federal financial assistance, and, in your appropriations capacity, please also fund the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights at a level so that its staff can effectively carry out its statutory responsibilities.

Sincerely,

