Dear Representative/Senator,

On behalf of the below xx education organizations, we write to express our opposition to the tax bills currently being considered in Congress that are based on the White House and congressional Republicans' "Unified Framework for Fixing Our Broken Tax Code." These proposals would undermine funding for our public schools, colleges and universities.

For example, in its current form, the House tax bill would hurt the ability of state and local governments to fund important public services like public education by eliminating the state and local tax deduction, ending tax benefits that help families afford college, and repealing the tax deduction currently used by educators who pay out of their own pockets for essential supplies for their students.

The proposed elimination or modification of the state and local tax (SALT) deduction is of particular concern. Not only will it hurt more than 43 million taxpayers from all 50 states and across all income brackets, it also will hurt the ability of state and local governments to fund essential services such as public education. Because state and local funding accounts for more than half of higher education funding and about 90 percent of funding for K-12 schools, any reduction will almost certainly lead to cuts in public education.

Eliminating the SALT deduction will also make it much more difficult for state and local governments to raise the revenues necessary to bring state funding back to pre-recession levels (state funding for colleges and universities this year is still approximately $9 billion below 2008 levels) and to contribute the resources our public schools and colleges need. Over time, it is very likely that a change in this tax provision would erode funding for education at a level deep enough to mirror a direct cut in federal, state and/or local funding.

Changes to education-specific tax provisions, including 529 accounts, the educator expense deduction, and the student loan interest deduction, are also very troubling. The House bill expands 529 accounts so they can be used for private K-12 educational expenses of up to $10,000. This is a major change from current tax policy under which the existing Coverdell accounts (which are income-restricted) were the only type of tax-free account available to parents for private school expenses. This change is a first step toward more traditional private school voucher and voucher-like schemes that redirect public funding to private schools instead of investing in public schools, which 90 percent of students attend. The future revenues that will be lost under the K-12 tax benefits would be far better invested in important public school reforms such as reducing class size, supporting community schools, increasing professional development for educators, providing extra help to disadvantaged students, and constructing or modernizing public school buildings.

The House bill would also end the deduction for teachers who spend their own money on classroom materials, adding insult to injury for dedicated professionals trying to make sure their students have what they need, at the same time it cuts funding to those teachers' school districts.

The House bill also limits educational opportunity by eliminating nearly $30 billion in tax credits that help students go to college. There are currently numerous tax benefits directed toward education, including tax credits, tax deductions, and tax-preferred savings accounts that help families save for and afford college. The House bill eliminates the majority of these benefits, including the student loan interest deduction. Additionally, the House bill creates a new tax on college endowments, while also cutting the charitable deduction benefits they rely on.

Finally, the decision of how tax reform will be paid for—or not—will have a significant impact on federal funding for education. If tax reform is deficit-financed and adds to the federal debt, as both the budget resolution and the House bill would allow, there will be increased pressure for Congress to curb direct spending for education and all discretionary spending. Already tight appropriations caps have caused Congress to propose to slash funding for important education programs and to resort to rescissions in unused Pell funding to maintain yearly education funding.

What makes these tax proposals even more problematic is that, at the same time Congress is considering this reckless legislation, it is also negotiating a spending bill that will likely require cuts in the same programs the tax bill will harm.

We are deeply committed to ensuring students get the best possible education and support, and the elements of the "Unified Framework" and House tax bill fall far short of this basic expectation. Congress can—and must—do better. **Because the changes proposed would undermine funding for education across the education continuum, we oppose the tax bills currently being considered in Congress.**

Sincerely,
AASA: The School Superintendents Association
American Federation of Teachers