

September 22, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bernard Sanders
Chairman
Senate Committee on the Budget
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Budget
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, Chairman Sanders, Ranking Member Graham,

On August 25th, 40 civil and disability rights, and education justice organizations wrote to urge you to include in a budget reconciliation bill the \$9 billion investment in a well-prepared, diverse, stable, and supported educator workforce outlined by the Biden-Harris administration. Since that letter was sent, the number of organizations lending their voice to this critical issue has increased. We are grateful for the House Education & Labor Committee's inclusion of some funding for many of the programs proposed by the Biden-Harris administration to increase the number of well-prepared, diverse teachers. We appreciate the Committee's attention to the issues we highlighted in the ways in which inequitable access to a well-prepared, diverse, supported, and stable educator workforce translates into a denial of opportunities to learn for students of color, students impacted by poverty, students with disabilities, and students learning English. We recognize the hard work of the House Education & Labor Committee as they worked under a tight allocation while managing lots of vital priorities. The House Education and Labor Committee's \$1.1 billion allocation to the teacher and leader workforce is a foundation from which the Senate should drastically expand so that we can close long-standing inequities in access to a well-prepared, diverse, stable and supported educator workforce that without action the pandemic threatens to further exacerbate. We, the 65 undersigned organizations, ask that the Senate HELP Committee build on the House's progress and allocate the full \$9 billion investment in the educator workforce, as we previously requested. These investments include:

1. **Allocating \$2.8 billion to the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) Program, to support comprehensive educator preparation programs.** This investment in TQP would expand access to comprehensive educator preparation programs like teacher residencies, which research suggests are associated with greater teacher diversity, effectiveness, and retention. Likewise, these funds can be used to increase access to Grow Your Own Programs which tap diverse local talent to increase access to well-prepared teachers. Despite TQP's potential, it has been chronically underfunded – its most recent funding is only about 18% of the program's authorization level.

2. **Investing \$400 million in the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence program to support comprehensive educator preparation at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), tribal colleges and universities (TCUs), and other minority-serving institutions (MSIs).** HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs, have been longstanding sources of well-prepared and diverse teachers. The Hawkins program is specifically designed to support and expand comprehensive preparation programs at these institutions and provide students at these institutions the ability to afford this preparation through financial aid. Yet, despite these colleges' and universities' integral contributions to a strong and diverse teacher pipeline, the program has never been funded.

3. **Providing \$900 million to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part D's personnel preparation program to support the comprehensive preparation of special educators.** The latest data show 48 states and DC have special educator shortages. IDEA Part D's personnel preparation program (IDEA-D-PP) is specifically designed to address our country's chronic special educator shortage by investing in comprehensive educator preparation programs focused on preparing special educators, specialized instructional support personnel, and postsecondary educators that support their training. It is important to note that the well-known IDEA Part B program (the state grant program) cannot be used to prepare new special educators. IDEA-D-PP's annual funding, which this year is below 2010 levels, is far from meeting the high demand for skilled special educators, making this investment all the more important.

4. **Updating the nations' teacher service scholarship program by doubling the TEACH Grant award amount and reforming its loan conversion penalty.** Despite research showing that well-designed service scholarship programs can incentivize diverse students to enter teaching through comprehensive pathways, the TEACH Grant award amount has not been increased since it was created through budget reconciliation in 2007. Since that time, the cost of public college has increased by over 31% and student loan debt has increased by \$1 trillion. To make the program more effective the award amount should be doubled to align with the cost of preparation today and remove inequitable affordability barriers and student loan debt burdens that students of color face. Likewise, to make the program more manageable and to further incentivize service, the administration has proposed reforming the loan conversion penalty. We think Congress should go a step further and eliminate it. These reforms which would allow more and diverse students the ability afford comprehensive educator preparation were excluded from the House bill and we urge you to include them in the Senate's reconciliation bill.

5. **Creating a \$1.6 billion fund to help teachers earn additional certifications in high-demand subjects and in certifications that are associated with greater effectiveness.** While many teachers are ready to obtain certifications in high-need subjects, costs can be a barrier. We also know that shortages of certified teachers disproportionately impact schools that serve high percentages of students of color and students who are impacted by poverty. Further, there is insufficient systematic financial support for teachers to pursue advanced certifications that are associated with greater effectiveness, like National Board Certification. The proposed \$1.6 billion

“Answer the Call – Supporting In-Demand Credentials for Teachers program” will help close equity gaps in student access to certified and effective teachers. This program was also excluded from the House bill and we urge you to include it in the Senate’s reconciliation bill.

6. Investing \$2 billion in teacher and school leadership so that educators can make even greater impacts. The Biden-Harris Administration proposed an investment in teacher leadership through the “Expanding Opportunities for Teacher Leadership and Development program.” This program would provide opportunities for experienced teachers to serve as leaders through high-quality teacher mentorship programs, which research demonstrates decreases teacher turnover and improves student academic achievement. The House Education and Labor Committee bill proposed investing \$198 million in principal leadership, through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act’s School Leadership Recruitment and Support Program (SLRSP). Research shows clear links between effective principals and student outcomes like increased academic achievement and reduced absenteeism and teacher outcomes like reduced turnover and improved working conditions. Congress should invest \$2 billion in both teacher and school leadership. SLRSP investments should be targeted toward what research shows are the effective elements of high-quality principal preparation and professional development programs, which include proactive recruitment; field-based internships and coaching led by expert leaders; close partnerships between districts and programs; well-supported cohorts; strong curriculum that includes opportunities for applied learning; and professional learning focused on leading instruction, creating supportive , collegial school environments, developing people, managing change, and meeting the needs of diverse student populations.

The pandemic has brought into stark relief – and without action, threatens to exacerbate – the educational inequities that students of color, students impacted by poverty, students with disabilities, and other historically underserved students have long faced. The \$9 billion investment in a well-prepared, diverse, stable, and supported educator workforce proposed by the Biden-Harris Administration provides a roadmap to Congress to begin to address these inequities through the single most important in-school factor to student learning – educators. We urge the Senate to seize this moment and chart a new, more equitable path for those students that are the furthest from opportunity by including this \$9 billion investment in the educator workforce in a budget reconciliation bill.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
ACTFL
Alliance for Quality Education
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Atheists
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
Association of Educational Service Agencies

Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
Californians Together Center for Applied Linguistics
Center for Learner Equity
Children's Defense Fund
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
EDGE Consulting Partners
Education Law Center-PA
Education Reform Now
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
Hispanic Federation
KnowledgeWorks
Latinos For Education
League of United Latin American Citizens
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Learning Forward
NAACP
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Directors of Education
National Black Justice Coalition
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Center for Teacher Residencies
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Down Syndrome Society
National Education Association
National Indian Education Association (NIEA)
National Institute for Excellence in Teaching
National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium
National Rural Education Association
National Urban League
National Writing Project
New America's Education Policy Program

New Leaders
PDK International
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Public Advocates
Rural School and Community Trust
Schott Foundation for Public Education
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
TEACH
Teach Plus
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
The Arc of the United States
The Education Trust
The Southern Education Foundation
TNTP
UnidosUS

CC:

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
S-221, The Capitol
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The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
S-230, The Capitol
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