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February 6, 2018

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of our three million members and the 50 million students they serve, we would like to express our views on the latest continuing resolution — the fifth since the start of fiscal year 2018, one-third of which is now behind us. This bill, like its predecessors, ignores pressing needs and is yet another demonstration of a failure to govern.

For too long, Congress has tied its own hands with senseless and untenable budget caps, resulting in wholly inadequate funding for critical programs like education and health care. Twice before, Congress has raised the caps and needs to do so again — not just for defense, but for non-defense discretionary spending, now at a 40-year low as a percentage of GDP, according to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. Congress should again raise the caps on an equal basis. This bill, however, ignores the budget caps *only* for defense. It willfully fails to address the need to increase investments in education and other non-defense programs essential to our nation's security and prosperity.

The lack of a true budget agreement continues to prevent adequate investments in education, especially programs that target the students most in need like the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Title I. In this first full year of implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) — enacted with broad, bipartisan support — Congress should be helping states and local school districts by providing adequate funding.

We find it unconscionable that Congress has again failed to provide a permanent legislative solution for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) when a fix with bipartisan support is at hand — a fix that also has the support of the overwhelming majority of Americans. Since September, when President Trump declared an end to DACA, the 800,000 Dreamers brought to the United States as children, including 9,000 educators, have been living in fear, not knowing what their future holds. This treatment is cruel and immoral. Moreover, an overwhelming majority favors allowing Dreamers to remain in the country that is their only home — a recent [Quinnipiac University](#) poll found that Americans support allowing Dreamers to stay in the United States and become citizens by an almost 8 to 1 margin. Congress should muster the courage to reach an agreement forthwith to provide a permanent legal solution for Dreamers.

In addition, Congress still needs to renew the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) and Community Self Determination Act, which expired in September 2015. The law helped support essential community services in 775 rural counties located near national forests, including public

education for over 9 million students. Loss of that support has forced high schools to offer fewer courses, so some students may not fulfill the basic requirements for admittance to their state university systems. Athletic and other enrichment opportunities are vanishing, along with music and art classes. Fewer educators are available to provide reading interventions, work with special needs students, and carry out critical programs. Funds for public safety and emergency response have also dried up, leaving everyone less safe — residents of the affected counties as well as those who visit them.

We acknowledge that the continuing resolution renews funding for 10,000-plus community health centers serving more than 27 million low-income children, pregnant women, disabled individuals, and people in treatment for opioid addiction. Due to lack of funding, these centers have had to lay off 50,000 workers; some have shut down entirely. But funding these centers is not enough. Congress also needs to renew and fully fund the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV), which serves as a medical and social safety net for at-risk parents and their children.

It is time for Congress to stop playing political games and start addressing the real issues confronting America, especially the most vulnerable among us. The failure to address critical issues in a timely manner prevents the fulfillment of our nation's promise of equal opportunity for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Egan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association