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January 19, 2018

United States Congress
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

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 fourth since the start of fiscal year 2018, almost one-third of which is now behind us. This bill, which kicks the can down the road for another month and ignores pressing needs, 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. 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 (Source: Center for Budget and Policy Priorities). Congress should again raise the caps on an equal basis. The lack of a budget agreement continues to prevent adequate investments in education, especially for programs that benefit 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.

The failure to provide a permanent legislative solution for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is also unconscionable, especially 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 20,000 educators, have been living in fear, not knowing what their future holds. They do not deserve such treatment. The American people say Dreamers should be allowed to remain in the country that is their only home. The most recent poll, released by [Quinnipiac University](#) just days ago, found that Americans overwhelmingly support allowing Dreamers to stay in the United States and become citizens by an almost 8 to 1 margin — 79 percent — while 7 percent say they should stay but not become citizens. Congress should muster the courage to reach an agreement this week and protect the Dreamers.

On other issues, renewing funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) — a highly effective program with a history of broad, bipartisan support — should be routine. The continuing resolution would renew CHIP for six years with no strings attached, but that merely rights the wrong created by failure to renew the program in a timely manner. CHIP has a proven record of success in providing high-quality, cost-effective health care for nearly 9 million low-

income children and 370,000 pregnant women who do not qualify for Medicaid but can't afford private insurance. Thanks to CHIP, the number of uninsured children has dropped by nearly 70 percent since 1997.

We acknowledge that the continuing resolution would postpone implementing the 40 percent excise tax on "high cost" employer-sponsored health coverage for two years, from 2020 to 2022. This tax will have an indiscriminate impact on a broad range of individuals and families with quality healthcare coverage, including women, older workers, and families living in areas with high-cost medical services. For that reason, the tax — a back-door pay cut for millions of working families — should be fully repealed, not just delayed.

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