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September 9, 2025

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the 1.8 million members of the AFT and the millions of children and families we serve, we urge you to oppose the fiscal year 2026 appropriations bill for the departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education being considered by this committee.

Education appropriations have for decades been bipartisan. Clearly not anymore.

We refuse to stand by silently while this administration and congressional majority abandon public education, make college less affordable, kick millions off healthcare, and take food from hungry children. And for what? to give massive tax cuts to big corporations and billionaires. AFT members are like most Americans: We want a pathway to the middle class and opportunity, affordability and dignity.

This bill should work to lower everyday costs for families—on healthcare, prescription drugs, education, and more—but it does the opposite, doubling down on policies that will devastate our communities. For example, instead of helping make schools welcoming and safe places, with curriculum that is engaging and relevant, it takes a hatchet to funding programs our students need.

Unfortunately, this appropriations bill matches some of the worst of the president's budget in slashing funding for Department of Education programs by more than \$12 billion (15 percent) below last year, which means a funding level below what it was 15 years ago, even as costs have risen along with student needs. It also cuts Department of Labor funding by \$4 billion (about 30 percent) below FY 2025, meaning workers will have fewer protections and be less safe at work. The Department of Health and Human Services is cut by \$6.8 billion (6 percent) making our country less healthy and secure.

The huge cuts to education, labor and healthcare include:

- Slashing K-12 funding, such as by cutting Title I by \$5.2 billion (27 percent). Title I is the foundational federal support for K-12 students, directing targeted resources for low-income students and communities. Title I funding supports the nuts and bolts of day-to-day schooling, like paying for literacy-focused support staff, smaller class sizes, and other student supports.
- Additional cuts or eliminations impacting K-12 students flow from decimating proven programs that support the recruitment, retention and training of teachers (Title II); help students learn English and meet challenging state academic standards (TITLE III); and provide comprehensive services through community schools that meet the holistic needs of children, families and communities (Title IV).
- Adding insult to injury for postsecondary students trying to access job training or a college degree: On top of the \$300 billion cut to higher education recently enacted in a partisan manner through P.L. 119-21, this bill eliminates adult education funding at the Department of Labor, taking away job training opportunities from millions of Americans. The bill also cuts campus-based aid (by eliminating \$450 million in funding for the Federal Work-Study and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants programs. This will push college students further into debt or out of higher education completely.
- For health, the bill includes \$500 million in cuts to the National Institutes of Health as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, undermining critical medical research and vaccines that have the potential to offer life-saving cures or treatments.
- Further examples of the callousness of this bill include shortchanging substance use prevention programs and mental health services, cutting maternal and child health, and gutting labor programs aimed at protecting vulnerable workers and keeping them safe.

This bill should be about growing investments in the public good—and investing in real solutions to strengthen and expand it. The committee should work together on a blueprint that helps students succeed and can be scaled and resourced. Such a plan should include expected amendments to restore funding for Title I and community

schools, as well as really investing in proven programs to improve literacy and a high-quality career and technical education in the growing number of interested communities and districts yearning to do so.

The American people voted last fall to strengthen, not weaken, public education. They do not support draconian cuts that decimate the public services our students, families and communities rely on. That is why the current bill must be rejected and rewritten on a bipartisan basis.

Thank you for considering our views on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randi Weingarten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Randi" and last name "Weingarten" clearly distinguishable.

Randi Weingarten
President, AFT

RW : emc opeiu #2 afl-cio