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July 23, 2009

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 1.6 million members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), I am writing to urge you to support the many important investments in domestic priorities contained in the Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS) and Education Committee's appropriations bill for fiscal year 2010. We very much appreciate the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding that is continuing to flow to states and localities, but key human needs programs are still struggling to make up for lost ground since 2000, reeling from the current recession, and in need of these continued investments.

In particular, the Committee's bill includes important investments in a number of labor, education, and health programs, including employment services and job training programs, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Title I education funding, school improvement grants, special education, child care, Head Start, 9/11 health and screening, nurse training and efforts to protect the public from the H1N1 virus.

Labor Department programs, ranging from unemployment insurance, worker training and employment services, to wage and hour and safety programs, play an essential role in providing working families economic security and an opportunity to have good jobs. We strongly oppose any amendments which would reduce funding from these programs.

The current outbreak of the H1N1 virus highlights the need for advance planning and occupational safety standards to protect healthcare workers, emergency responders and other workers who come in close contact with infected individuals and are at high risk of workplace exposure and infection. The Committee's bill provides important direction for federal agencies to move swiftly to prepare for the upcoming flu season and protect healthcare and other high risk workers and our communities during this and future pandemics.

We thank the Committee for its commitment to investing in public services and reversing several years of flat funding and cuts to human needs programs. We urge Congress to sustain this commitment to all the vitally important programs in the Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations bill for FY 2010.

Sincerely,

Charles M. Loveless
Director of Legislation

CML:blb

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

TEL (202) 429-1000 FAX (202) 429-1293 TDD (202) 659-0446 WEB www.afscme.org 1625 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-5687