Dear Representative:

On behalf of the members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), I urge you to support the FY 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (Labor-HHS-Education).

With members in communities across the nation, serving in hundreds of different occupations—from nurses to corrections officers, child care providers to sanitation workers—AFSCME members provide the vital services that make America happen. Our members understand that cuts to education programs mean fewer paraprofessionals, nurses, librarians and other staff that are essential to fostering safe and effective schools. That cuts to health programs mean fewer resources to address the opioid epidemic and other health care problems plaguing our communities. And that cuts to job training programs limit the opportunities for Americans to obtain employment and financial security.

In recent years, funding for non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs has failed to keep pace with inflation or the needs of our growing population. Making matters worse, the subcommittee allocation for Labor-HHS-Education—which funds many of the programs most critical to strengthening our communities, including job training, health care, child welfare, services for the elderly, education and other important public services—has remained flat or increased by a disproportionately small amount, relative to other subcommittee allocations. As a result of years of underfunding for critical programs, AFSCME members that have dedicated their careers to public service are seeing their neighbors struggle and their communities suffer.

We urge you to stand against the efforts to undermine basic protections for individuals with pre-existing conditions and weaken the ACA marketplaces. We urge you to support passage of H.R. 986.

While we believe that even more resources will be needed in the coming years to reverse the damage caused by years of underinvestment in the programs most important to our communities, the Labor-HHS-Education bill being considered by the

May 7, 2019

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
House Appropriations Committee is a very strong step in the right direction. In fact, the contrast between the legislation being considered by the committee and the FY 2020 budget proposed by President Trump could not be starker. While the proposed legislation includes significant increases for critical programs that will help Americans live better, healthier, and richer lives, President Trump is proposing draconian cuts that will do extraordinary harm to public health, public education, and countless other essential public services.

By providing an additional $11.8 billion in discretionary funding relative to FY 2019, the funding bill being considered by the committee will make an extraordinary difference in our country, strengthening our communities and ensuring that more people have access to quality public services. Benefits of this legislation include:

- An additional $1.2 billion for the Department of Labor that will strengthen the job training and employment programs that ensure people have the skills and opportunities they need to succeed in the workplace, as well as the worker protection programs that protect working people from wage theft, dangerous working conditions and other problems in the workplace.

- An additional $8.5 billion for the Department of Health and Human Services that will strengthen programs addressing mental health, substance abuse, suicide prevention, and other critical public health concerns; provide essential help to low-income families with historic increases in funding for early education programs, including Head Start, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, and Preschool Development Grants; and address other important priorities such as loan forgiveness for behavioral health professionals and support for Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics.

- An additional $4.4 billion in new funding for the Department of Education that will benefit students and educators at all levels, from early childhood development through postsecondary education; including significant investments in programs that will benefit special education students and those in high-need schools.

Public service is not just a job, it’s a calling. AFSCME members do the work they do because it means something to make a community a better place to live. The legislation being considered by the committee provides significant and much-needed funding increases that will support the work of AFSCME members and strengthen our communities, and we urge all members of the committee to support this bill.
Sincerely,

Scott Frey
Director of Federal Government Affairs

SF:GG:cg