December 20, 2017

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 1.6 million active and retired members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), I urge you to finalize fiscal year (FY) 2018 funding for the entire fiscal year. At the same time Congress must include in any budget agreement immediate sequester relief for non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs providing parity with any defense increase. Congress must also keep funding bills free of poison pill policy riders.

The nation faces a dire emergency at this time as NDD programs, in particular, face deep cuts of approximately $12 billion. These cuts will threaten essential services that ensure that our communities are safe and prosperous, that enable working families to attend school and work, and that protect struggling Americans. Public services, such as education, health services, transportation, infrastructure, law enforcement, social services, community development and more are essential public services that provide needed investments that create jobs and expand the economy.

As the year comes to a close, AFSCME also urges Congress to act without delay on pressing needs by extending the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which provides health care to nine million children. Congress must also provide disaster funding to deal with catastrophic storms and wildfires, enhance Medicaid funding for Puerto Rico, and pass the DREAM Act to prevent the deportation of 800,000 young adults who immigrated as children and to provide them with a pathway to citizenship.

Unfortunately, the recently released disaster aid supplemental, H.R. 4667, not only fails short of the aid needed, particularly for Puerto Rico, but it unnecessarily requires approval by its oversight board for recovery efforts, which could cause needless delay of on-going recovery efforts. H.R. 4667 also includes additional riders that are unrelated to the underlying relief effort, which should not be in the bill, including expanding a Department of Agriculture pilot program that could impede access to nutrition assistance for struggling families. We also oppose revisions to the Robert T. Stafford Act that would allow houses of worship to receive disaster assistance. This change violates our Constitution’s wall of separation between church and state.
It is irresponsible for Congress to further delay finalizing FY 2018 funding and to address these urgent problems.

Sincerely,

Scott Frey
Director of Federal Government Affairs

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