

November 22, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services and Education  
260 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services and Education  
260 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education  
& Related Agencies  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education  
& Related Agencies  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

### **\$17 Million for Statewide Family Engagement Centers**

Dear Chair Murray, Ranking Member Blunt, Chair DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

The 86 undersigned national and state organizations write in support of robust funding for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFEC) grant program and respectfully request no less than \$17 million in funding for the program for FY 2022. \$17 million matches the level proposed in the Senate Democrat FY 2022 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (L-HHS-ED) appropriations bill.

This year parents, guardians, educators and school leaders have continued to endure pandemic-related challenges of online, hybrid, and altered in-person instruction. New challenges have arisen in engaging families at a time when families are primary to student success. High-impact family engagement, as supported by the SFEC program, is critical to ensuring that students are not suffering from learning loss, particularly those whose families and communities – many of whom already faced significant disadvantages before the COVID-19 pandemic – have been most impacted by the pandemic.

The SFEC program provides much-needed technical assistance and partnership development to states and school districts to foster meaningful engagement with families to further their children's academic and developmental progress. While SFECs work with all parents and schools throughout their state, many focus on students of color, English learners, and recent immigrant children working to integrate into their new

communities. Additionally, SFECs provide direct services to families to give them the tools to effectively work with their child's school to improve their child's academic outcomes and overall well-being.

Research shows that family engagement advances the academic and developmental progress of our nation's children and drives increases in student achievement.<sup>1</sup> The success of SFECs has been well documented,<sup>2</sup> and they have served as vital resources for families during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>3</sup> Our organizations believe that an investment in SFECs is critical to ensuring that families are meaningfully supported and engaged in their child's education so they can support our nation's students in becoming fully prepared for higher education and careers.

The funding Congress allocated to the SFEC Program in FY21 was only enough to support family engagement in 13 states: Arizona, Connecticut, Hawaii, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, and West Virginia. Although the American Rescue Plan Act provided emergency funds for K-12 education to cover pandemic-related expenses, it did not include funding dedicated to Statewide Family Engagement Centers.<sup>4</sup> Robust funding is still needed to not only sustain the great work already underway, but also to expand the program to ensure that *all* families across the country – including families in your state – have access to this program in the coming years.

Historically family engagement has always been, and will continue to be, a strong bipartisan issue. Leaders of recent Dear Colleague letters supporting robust funding for the SFEC program include Representative Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA), Representative Glenn 'GT' Thompson (R-PA), Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) and Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC). Several colleagues from both sides of the aisle have continuously affirmed their support for an increase of funding for SFECs on the behalf of their constituents. More than ever,

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<sup>1</sup> See "Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in Education." National Education Association. 2008. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.204.7661&rep=rep1&type=pdf>. See also Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. "A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement." National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools. 2002. <https://sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> See "Catalyzing Family, School, and Community Partnerships: A Review of the Work of the Statewide Family Engagement Centers." National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement (NAFSCE). 2021. <https://nafsce.org/page/sfcreport>.

<sup>3</sup> See "Statewide Family Engagement Centers making strategic, widespread impact amid pandemic." National Center for Families Learning. 2020. <https://www.familieslearning.org/blog/sfec-impact-pandemic>.

<sup>4</sup> National PTA outlined the need for such dedicated funding in April 2020. See "National PTA calls on Congress to provide funding for family engagement, remote learning, special education and child nutrition programs in the next COVID-19 relief bill." <http://bit.ly/Apr2020COVIDLetterPTA>.

continued bipartisan support for the program is needed to help reverse the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthen family engagement in schools.

For the reasons above, we respectfully request \$17 million in funding for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers grant program in the FY 2022 L-HHS-ED appropriations bill, a desperately needed increase from the \$12.5 million allocated to the program in FY21. Thank you again for your consideration of our request, and we look forward to working with you to support this important program.

Sincerely,

Afterschool Alliance  
Alabama PTA  
Alabama Parent Education Center  
ARC in Action  
Arizona PTA  
Carolina Family Engagement Center  
Chester County School District  
Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities  
Colorado PTA  
Council for Exceptional Children  
Council of Administrators of Special Education  
Communities In Schools of South Carolina - Midlands  
Delaware PTA  
East Middle School PTA  
EDGE Consulting Partners  
Federation for Children with Special Needs  
Fiesta Educativa, Inc.  
Florida PTA  
Formed Families Forward  
Illinois PTA  
INCLUDEnyc  
Learning Disabilities Association of America  
Learning Heroes  
Louisiana PTA  
Maine Parent Teacher Association  
Minnesota PTA  
Mississippi PTA  
Missouri PTA  
MT State PTA  
NAESP

National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement  
National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)  
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)  
National Center for Families Learning  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
National Center for Parent Leadership, Advocacy, and Community Empowerment  
(National PLACE)  
National Council for Community and Education Partnerships  
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)  
National Military Family Association  
National Organization for Women  
National PTA  
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation  
Nevada PTA  
New Jersey PTA  
New Mexico PTA  
New York State Parent Teacher Association  
North Carolina PTA  
North Dakota PTA  
Oklahoma PTA  
Oregon PTA  
PACER Center  
Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC)  
Parent Information Center of Delaware  
Parent Revolution  
Parents as Teachers  
Parents Helping Parents Inc.  
Pathfinder Services of ND -State PTI  
PEAK Parent Center  
Pennsylvania PTA  
Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence  
PTI Nebraska  
PUERTO RICO PTA  
Research, Evaluation, and Measurement Center, University of South Carolina  
Rhode Island PTA  
RI Parent Information Network  
SC Center for Fathers and Families  
SchoolHouse Connection  
South Carolina PTA  
South Carolina School Improvement Council

South Dakota PTA  
Southwest Human Development  
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network  
TASH  
Tennessee PTA  
The Advocacy Institute  
The American Counseling Association  
The Parents' Place of MD  
THRIVE Center  
University of South Carolina  
USVI PTSA  
Vermont Family Network  
Vermont PTA  
Washington State PTA  
West Virginia PTA  
Wisconsin PTA