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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2803

March 8, 2019

Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

I am writing to ask for your support in funding Title II of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in your Fiscal Year 2020 budget request. Title II provides for the Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund, a highly successful grant program that supports professional development and recruitment of quality teachers for our schools. Historically, underinvestment in our teacher pipeline has led to a national teacher shortage. Between 2009 and 2014, teacher education enrollment dropped 35 percent, a decrease of almost 240,000 teachers nationwide, and a 2018 report found that teacher shortages have since worsened for the majority of states. As they struggle to fill positions, schools have been forced to hire underqualified teachers and class sizes have reached record levels. The need to recruit quality teachers for our classrooms, and provide those teachers with professional development, has bipartisan support among students, teachers, and parents, all of whom will benefit when we prioritize funding for Title II.

The importance of investing in teacher training and recruitment is clear, especially in high-growth areas, such as Nevada's Clark County School District – the fifth largest in the nation. Sixteen percent of the teachers who began during the 2015-2016 school calendar left the Clark County district within a year. As a result, several subject areas lack an adequate supply of instructors, contributing to Nevada having the largest average class sizes in the nation for the past two years. In response, many states have turned to emergency or short-term licensure to fill teacher vacancies, further jeopardizing student success. In Nevada, the Learning Policy Institute reported in 2016 that 560 teachers were not appropriately certified for the subject area they were teaching.

The data is clear that underfunding Title II would hamper implementation of the ESSA, lead to teacher layoffs, and have drastic consequential implications for student learning outcomes. According to a 2016 Department of Education report, more than half of U.S. school districts use Title II funds to pay for professional development. Additionally, a substantial number of districts use Title II funds for teacher recruitment and class-size reduction by paying for the salaries of nearly 9,000 teachers nationwide. Recent discussions regarding recruitment and training of our nation's teachers have generated bipartisan support. As the Administration evaluates various budgetary proposals, I recommend preserving and funding Title II at a robust level to ensure we can provide quality teachers, and a quality education, for our children.

Sincerely,

Susie Lee
Member of Congress