



April 4, 2017

The Honorable Roy Blunt
United States Senate
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
United States House of Representatives
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
United States House of Representative
2467 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

I am writing on behalf of the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN), the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), and the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) to urge the Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee to provide at least \$1.6 billion for the new Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant (SSAEG) in its FY18 spending bill. This new block grant, established by the Every Student Succeeds Act (P.L. 114-95), offers school districts greatly needed flexibility to allocate resources toward local needs, including effectively using technology to support teaching and learning.

CoSN is the only national professional association dedicated exclusively to the education technology leaders who are working to transform learning. These leaders serve nearly 13 million students across the United States and see first hand how technology is transforming learning. ISTE empowers learners to flourish in a connected world by cultivating a passionate professional learning community, linking educators and partners, leveraging knowledge and expertise, advocating for strategic policies, and continually improving learning and teaching. SETDA is the principal association serving, supporting, and representing U.S. state and territorial digital learning leaders. SETDA seeks to improve education through technology policy and practice and is committed to maintaining a future-focused, holistic view on how to leverage technology for education.

Technology serves as a powerful tool for promoting educational opportunities. SSAEG allows schools to implement personalized instruction; data-driven decision-making and accountability; digital textbooks; technology professional learning; and online assessments. It also provides districts with funds to help bridge the “homework gap,” allowing them to provide students unconnected to broadband at home with mobile devices and hot spots. Failing to provide these critical supports for education technology and professional development as our education system transitions to digital classrooms and personalized learning models will undermine efforts to implement ESSA and negatively impact our nation’s educators and students.

We believe as well that an investment in SSAEG and technology will pay significant dividends for our students when they enter the workforce and for the nation’s economy as a whole. According to research by Glassdoor, U.S. employers had more than 260,000 unfilled information technology jobs, which Glassdoor valued as worth \$20.1 billion to our economy. In order to fill these positions, employers require applicants with robust technology skills. Well-equipped classrooms, technology-proficient educators, and a curriculum optimized to take advantage of the benefits technology offers to students will help create the workforce today’s employers require.

Technology in education is now at a crossroads – and we must move forward, through funding of SSAEG, in order to create competitive, educated students. Thank you for carefully considering this important national need as you develop the Department of Education’s budget for the next fiscal year.

Sincerely,

Keith Krueger
Chief Executive Officer
CoSN

Cheryl Scott Williams
Interim CEO
ISTE

Tracy Weeks
Executive Director
SETDA