



April 7, 2023

Senator Tammy Baldwin
Chair, LHHS Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Robert Aderholt
Chair, LHHS Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member, LHHS Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, LHHS Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Baldwin, Ranking Member Capito, Chair Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, the undersigned members of the Coalition for Teaching Quality and other partner organizations urge you to provide meaningful funding levels for the federal programs designed to close opportunity gaps in student access to a well-prepared, diverse, experienced, and stable educator workforce. The Coalition for Teaching Quality represents national civil rights, disability, parent, student, community, and education organizations advocating together to ensure that all students have access to well-prepared and effective teachers and school leaders.

This school year, all 50 states reported teacher shortages in at least one subject area.¹ Nearly every state is facing a shortage of teachers in high-need subjects, with 48 states reporting shortages of special education teachers, 46 in science teachers, 44 in math teachers, and 44 in language teachers.² Moreover, an August 2022 report found that there at least 36,000 vacant teaching positions nationally and about 163,000 positions are being filled by underqualified teachers.³ Further, a RAND study released this summer showed that educators were twice as likely to report job-related stress and reported higher levels of burnout than other working adults.⁵ 55% of educators – and about 60% of Black and Hispanic/Latino educators – reported in a survey this year that they plan to leave the profession earlier than they had originally planned.⁶ When it comes to the educator pipeline, enrollment in undergraduate education is 1.4 million students smaller than it was before the pandemic, which is concerning as 80% of educators begin teaching with a bachelor’s degree.⁷ While some states are taking research-based approaches to stabilize and grow the educator workforce, others are lowering the bar, for example, allowing those without bachelor’s degrees to teach.^{8,9} Meanwhile, some districts are moving to four-day school weeks.¹⁰

We know that inequitable access to a well-prepared, diverse, experienced, and stable educator workforce impacts underserved students the most. In fact, prior to the pandemic, historically underserved students were disproportionately taught by inexperienced teachers or teachers on substandard licenses (e.g. long-term substitutes, emergency credentialed, or out of field teachers). Moreover, teacher turnover rates where 50% higher in schools of concentrated poverty than wealthy schools and 70% higher in schools

servicing high concentrations of students of color compared to schools servicing high concentrations of white students.¹¹

Research has shown that teachers who enter the profession through less comprehensive preparation pathways – such as emergency and alternative pathways that do not offer student teaching and a full curriculum for teaching – are two to three times more likely to turn over than those who receive comprehensive preparation. Access to comprehensive pre-service teacher preparation – that includes intensive student teaching as well as study about children’s learning and development, curriculum and teaching methods, and how to teach English learners and students with disabilities – along with effective recruitment efforts, and ongoing, high-quality professional development are the key ingredients to ensuring that students have access to a well-prepared, diverse, experienced, and stable educator workforce.

We are now at an inflection point and seek your support to ensure our country rebuilds from the pandemic in an equitable manner where all students have access to a well-prepared, diverse, experienced, and stable educator workforce. To chart a new course we need robust, sustained, systemic, and research-based investments in the educator workforce that support educators throughout their career so they have the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to help students thrive, especially the students furthest from opportunity.

Thus, we urge you to make the following investments in FY 2024 that support student access to a well-prepared, diverse, experienced, and stable educator workforce. These investments are summarized here and described in more detail below:

- **\$1 billion for the Teacher Quality Partnership program**
- **\$300 million for the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers for Excellence program**
- **\$300 million for the Individuals with Disabilities Act Part D Personnel Preparation program**
- **\$3 billion for the Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants program, Title II, Part- A of ESEA**
- **Update the TEACH Grant Program and Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program, to make access to comprehensive educator preparation affordable**
- **\$10 million to fund, for the first time, grants under the Graduate Fellowships to Prepare Faculty in High Need Areas at Colleges of Education program to help address critical teacher pipeline issue.**

Provide \$1 billion to the Teacher Quality Partnership program.

The Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) Grant program funds comprehensive educator preparation programs at institutions of higher education, that pair intensive student teaching under the supervision of an expert mentor teacher with coursework in children’s learning and development, as well as curriculum and teaching methods, including how to differentiate instruction. The type of comprehensive educator preparation programs it funds include teacher residencies, school leader preparation, and undergraduate- and graduate-preparation programs, all of which feature partnerships with underserved school districts. Comprehensive preparation, coupled with induction support, is effective at keeping teachers in the profession. In fact, teachers who enter the profession through programs that bypass intensive student teaching and coursework are 2 to 3 times more likely to leave the profession than those who enter through comprehensive preparation programs.¹² Teacher residency programs are a pathway into teaching that help to prepare diverse cohorts of teachers, increase teacher retention, and produce more effective teachers than less comprehensive preparation routes.¹³ Additionally residencies offer financial support that helps underwrite the cost of preparation in exchange for a service commitment of teaching a high-need subject in an underserved school for at least 3 years. Grow Your Own programs, including paraprofessional teacher training programs, 2+2 programs, and applied baccalaureate programs, recruit and train teacher candidates from nontraditional populations that are more likely to reflect the local communities they plan to teach in.

Candidates receive financial and other support like coaching as they work to complete their teaching credentials.¹⁴ Increased investments in TQP would help expand teacher residencies and Grow

Your Own programs, as shown in ED's latest notice for applications.¹⁵ TQP is a vital program that has been chronically underfunded. While states like California have invested \$350 million in residencies in 2021 alone – and are still facing shortages – TQP has yet to be funded at a tenth of our request (\$100) in annual appropriations bills, receiving only \$70 million in FY 2023.

Provide \$300 million to the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers for Excellence program.

The Augustus F. Hawkins Centers for Excellence program is specifically designed to support comprehensive teacher preparation at programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and minority-serving institutions (MSIs) of higher education including Alaska Native-serving or Native Hawaiian-serving institutions (ANNH), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving institutions (AANAPISI), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Native American-serving nontribal institution (NASNTI), and Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs). Teacher preparation programs at these institutions are a long-standing source of well-prepared and diverse teachers.¹⁶ For example, despite making up just 3% of institutions of higher education,¹⁷ HBCUs prepare 50% of the nation's Black teachers.¹⁸ Further, nearly half of all Latino/a teachers with a bachelor's degree earned their degree at an MSI. Roughly 35% of Asian Americans, 50% of Pacific Islanders, and 35% of Native Americans with a bachelor's degree in education earned it at an MSI.¹⁹ More than a decade after its enactment, Congress finally provided funding for Hawkins in FY 2022 (\$8 million) and again in FY 2023 (\$15 million), but a much larger investment is needed. To put this into context consider that the grant cycle under the TQP program is five years with an average award of \$1 million a year. This is a critical program that must be well funded if we are going to support a well-prepared, diverse, experienced, and stable educator workforce.

Provide \$300 million to the Individuals with Disabilities Act Part D Personnel Preparation program.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part D personnel preparation program (IDEADPP) is specially designed to comprehensively prepare specialized instructional support personnel, special educators, early educators, and the higher education faculty and researchers that support their preparation. Yet funding for this program pales in comparison to need. This academic year, almost every state (48) reported shortages of special education teachers. Additionally, prior to the pandemic, all areas of teacher shortage, including those of special education teachers, were more severe in schools serving higher populations of students of color.²⁰ There is a clear and immediate need to address these shortages by investing in this program.

Provide \$3 billion for the Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants program, Title II, Part- A of ESEA

Title II, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is designed to support student learning by growing the skills and expertise of educators through high-quality professional development, preparation, support for new educators such as induction and mentoring programs, changes to teaching and learning conditions such as lowering class sizes, and more. Access to high-quality professional development is an essential element to ensure that educators are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to support all children in meeting college and career ready standards. Similarly, Title II-A can help states and districts address educator shortages. When asked why they leave the profession, educators consistently cite lack of support in the areas of high-quality, on-going professional development; poor compensation; and inadequate working conditions. These concerns have only been exacerbated in recent years.

A robust federal investment in Title II, Part-A of ESEA will play a pivotal role in supporting states and local entities to address such challenges. Yet over the past seven fiscal years, there has been an over \$1.25 billion gap between Title II-A's authorization and funding level.²¹ Title II, Part-A provides states with necessary resources to implement ESEA as intended and support personnel in more effectively and equitably meeting the needs of students and the communities in which they serve. Title II, Part A is a crucial funding stream for educator professional development. Likewise, it is also a tool to address the critical shortage of educators. Ultimately, adequate funding for Title II, Part-A enables the teaching and learning conditions that help students thrive.

\$10 million to fund grants under the Graduate Fellowships to Prepare Faculty in High Need Areas at Colleges of Education program

Section 258 of the Higher Education Act (HEA) provides the Department with authority to award Graduate Fellowships to Prepare Faculty in High-Need Areas at Colleges of Education. The purpose of this program is to provide graduate fellowships to individuals to become education faculty that prepare individuals to become elementary school and secondary school teachers in high-needs subject areas. Graduate fellowships provided under this section support individuals in pursuing postbaccalaureate study which results in a degree related to teacher preparation and pedagogy in one of the following areas:

- Science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM);
- Special education; and
- Instruction of EL students, including postbaccalaureate study in language instruction educational programs.

The twin shortages of teachers and higher education faculty loom large, threatening our nation's capacity to deliver mandated services. Nearly every state reports a shortage of special education, STEM, and ELL teachers. Further compounding this national shortage is the estimate that millions of educators are expected to retire over the next decade. The same is true for higher education faculty. The combination of retirements and lowered enrollment in teacher preparation programs will act to further extend the shortage of well-prepared teachers. An investment in graduate fellowship programs can support rebuilding our nation's pipeline of well-qualified, profession ready educators.

Make access to comprehensive educator preparation affordable and effectively raise educator salaries by addressing student loan debt burdens

One barrier in the development of a well-prepared, diverse, experienced, and stable educator workforce is the high and rising cost of comprehensive educator preparation. Research shows that college students' potential debt burdens influence their career decisions, making them less likely to pursue a career in education²² where teachers earn about 20% to 30% less than similarly credentialed professionals in other fields.²³ Similarly, student loan debt burdens impact retention as they put further strain on educators' already low pay.²⁴

More than two-thirds of those entering the education field borrow money to pay for their higher education, resulting in an average debt of \$20,000 for those with a bachelor's degree and \$50,000 for those with a master's degree.²⁵ Further, the high cost of college and the burden of student loans disproportionately impacts students of color.²⁶ For example, data from the National Center for Education Statistics reveals that 91% of Black students and 82% of Latino/a students who prepared to teach took out federal student loans, compared to 76% of white students.²⁷ Further, federal financial aid data show that across racial and

ethnic groups, white students are the least likely to come from families that are unable to financially contribute to their higher education.

Service scholarship programs and loan forgiveness programs that help cover the cost of comprehensive educator preparation are found to be effective for the recruitment and retention of teachers when, among other important features, they cover all or a significant amount of the cost of preparation and are well-designed and implemented.²⁸

The TEACH Grant and Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program – both created in a bipartisan fashion – are our nation’s service scholarship and loan forgiveness programs that are specific to educators. The TEACH Grant provides a maximum award of about \$4,000 in aid per year to undergraduate and graduate students who commit to teaching a high-need subject in an underserved elementary or secondary school for four years. The Teacher Loan Forgiveness (TLF) Program provides up to \$5,000 in loan forgiveness for teachers that serve in underserved schools for five consecutive years. Teachers that serve in underserved schools and teach the high-need subject of special education or secondary math and science can earn up to \$17,500 worth of loan forgiveness. It has been well over a decade and a half since either program has been updated to align with the skyrocketing cost of higher education. For example, since 2007, when the TEACH Grant program was created, student loan debt has increased by \$1 trillion.²⁹

Through the FY 2024 appropriations process and through other legislative action Congress can take the following steps to align these programs to today’s preparation costs, dire educator shortages, and low educator pay:

- For the TEACH Grant Program, end the annual cuts to grant awards for educators in training which are scheduled to continue through 2029, double the program’s award, expand the program to early educators, and reform or eliminate the loan conversion penalty.
- For the TLF program, ensure all educators serving in underserved districts and early education programs can access the program, remove administrative burdens that keep educators under student debt for longer periods of time by allowing them to concurrently earn credit toward TLF and Public Service Loan Forgiveness, and have the federal government pay the monthly student loan bills of educators as they teach and then completely retire their debt after 5 years of service.

Together, these investments will provide our country with a well-prepared, diverse, experienced, and stable educator workforce that is equipped to teach the students furthest from opportunity.

On behalf of civil rights, disability, parent, student, community, and education organizations advocating for all students to have access to fully prepared and effective educators, thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the Co-Chairs of the Coalition for Teaching Quality, Kaitlyn Brennan (kaitlynbrennan88@gmail.com) and Kuna Tavalin (ktavalin@exceptionalchildren.org), for additional information.

Sincerely,

AACTE (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education)

AASA, The School Superintendents Association

ACTFL

American Federation of Teachers

American Occupational Therapy Association

American Psychological Association

Association of Educational Service Agencies

Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)

CAST

Center for Learner Equity

Council of Administrators of Special Education

Council for Exceptional Children

Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates

EDGE Consulting Partners

Higher Education Consortium for Special Education (HECSE)

Learning Forward

NAACP

National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

National Association for Music Education

National Association of Elementary School Principals

National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)

National Black Justice Coalition

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

National Education Association (NEA)

National Center for Learning Disabilities

National Council of Teachers of English

National Down Syndrome Society

National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium (NREAC)

National Rural Education Association (NREA)

New Leaders

Organizations Concerned about Rural Education

PDK International

Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)

Public Advocates

TEACH

Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children (TED)

Teach Plus

The Education Trust

CC: The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair; The Honorable Susan Collins, Vice Chair; The Honorable Kay Granger, Chair; The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member; The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Chairman; The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D., Ranking Member; The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Chairwoman; The Honorable Robert C. “Bobby” Scott, Ranking Member.

Endnotes:

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- ⁵ Steiner, E. D., Doan, S., Woo, A., Gittens, A. D., Lawrence, R. A., Berdie, L., Wolfe, R. L., Greer, L., & Schwartz, H. L. (2022). *Restoring Teacher and Principal Well-Being Is an Essential Step for Rebuilding Schools: Findings from the State of the American Teacher and State of the American Principal Surveys*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1108-4.html
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- ²⁹ New York Federal Reserve (n.d.). Center for Microeconomic Data <https://www.newyorkfed.org/microeconomics/hhdc/background> The Federal Reserve Fund of New York data shows that in quarter 4 of 2007, student loan debt stood at \$550 million. In quarter three of 2021 it stood at \$1.58 trillion.