



1806 Robert Fulton Drive, Reston, VA 20191
800-336-3768 | www.nafme.org

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

March 9, 2017

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

The National Association *for* Music Education (NAfME) and 50 of its Federated State Associations are writing to request the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations to not pass another Continuing Resolution (CR) for Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) and provide maximum funding for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grant program under Title IV, Part A of the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

For nearly fifteen years, students, educators, and parents faced the unintended consequences behind policies created under “No Child Left Behind,” which included frequently narrowed curricula that reduced engagement with critical subjects, such as music. The signing of ESSA marks a positive step forward for all students across the nation by focusing on what makes a student whole by embracing the intrinsic value of a “Well-Rounded Education,” which now includes music education as one part of the whole. The SSAE program embodies this fundamental value by allowing school districts the opportunity to choose where to best spend their SSAE dollars in order to provide access to a broad and rich curricula. Students desperately need a “Well-Rounded Education” for academic success and in today’s workforce.

If Congress chooses to apply another stopgap spending measure, the first year of implementation and effectiveness for SSAE would be severely hampered. As you may know, this new program is the result of a consolidation of more than 20 existing programs from Title V of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) into a single formula-funded flexible block grant program. If another Continuing Resolution (CR) is passed, the consolidated funding from those programs only amounts to \$278 million, less than one-fourth of its \$1.65 billion authorized funding level, which Congress agreed upon in a bipartisan manner. Significantly underfunding SSAE not only undermines the greater flexibility that Congress had intended for states and districts in ESSA, but also endangers the program’s long-term success and would not allow schools to make meaningful investments in critical areas of need, such as school music programs. Under the Continuing Resolution’s funding level, school districts would be forced to make difficult and unconscionable trade-offs between high-quality programs and would fail to create a “Well-Rounded” course of study. We urge the Committee to complete FY17’s appropriations process and match SSAE’s authorized level of \$1.65 billion.

In addition, we object any prescribing or amending language that recommends turning SSAE into a competitive grant program, regardless of the funding level. A competitive program would significantly disadvantage smaller and more rural school districts that often lack the resources to apply for funding at all. These same districts would benefit the most from the program, as they frequently serve students who

are in most need, a population that has shown to perform better academically when exposed to a broad curriculum that includes music programs. Sufficiently funding SSAE would eliminate any need for competitive targeting and increase local control over educational investments.

ESSA is a historic piece of legislation and we must ensure that it is properly funded within its first authorized year to guarantee a world-class education for our nation's students. On behalf of music educators, students, and advocates across the nation, we urge you to appropriate as close to full funding as possible for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant. Thank you for your consideration and for your service to our nation's students.

Sincerely,

The National Association *for* Music Education

State-Federated Organizations

Alabama Music Educators Association
Alaska Music Educators Association
Arizona Music Educators Association
Arkansas Music Educators Association
California Music Educators Association
Colorado Music Educators Association
Connecticut Music Educators Association
Delaware Music Educators Association
Florida Music Education Association
Georgia Music Educators Association
Hawaii Music Educators Association
Idaho Music Educators Association
Illinois Music Education Association
Indiana Music Education Association
Iowa Music Educators Association
Kansas Music Educators Association
Kentucky Music Educators Association
Louisiana Music Educators Association
Maine Music Educators Association
Maryland Music Educators Association
Massachusetts Music Educators Association
Michigan Music Education Association
Minnesota Music Educators Association
Mississippi Music Educators Association
Missouri Music Educators Association

Montana Music Educators Association
Nebraska Music Educators Association
Nevada Music Educators Association
New Hampshire Music Educators Association
New Jersey Music Educators Association
New Mexico Music Educators Association
New York State School Music Association
North Carolina Music Educators Association
North Dakota Music Educators Association
Ohio Music Education Association
Oklahoma Music Educators Association
Oregon Music Education Association
Pennsylvania Music Educators Association
Rhode Island Music Education Association
South Carolina Music Educators Association
South Dakota Music Education Association
Tennessee Music Education Association
Texas Music Educators Conference
Utah Music Educators Association
Vermont Music Educators Association
Virginia Music Educators Association
Washington Music Educators Association
West Virginia Music Educators Association
Wisconsin Music Educators Association
Wyoming Music Educators Association