September 28, 2023

Representative Kay Granger
Chair, Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Robert Aderholt
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Granger, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Chair Aderholt:

On behalf of the Music Education Policy Roundtable and other partner organizations, we strongly urge you to oppose the funding cuts to vital education programs proposed in the House Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHSSE) appropriations bill. If enacted, this would be the lowest allocation for the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill since FY 2008 and will have drastically negative impacts throughout America’s education system.

The Music Education Policy Roundtable is a public policy coalition led by the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) that advocates for a high-quality music education for all students. Consisting of music organizations, trade associations, and businesses, the Roundtable is unified under a single policy banner and works to achieve a consensus set of federal legislative recommendations aimed at ensuring the continued presence and expansion of high-quality music programs in America’s schools.

As revised by the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act designates music as part of a “well-rounded education,” providing federal funding and more opportunities for increased student access to music education. This commitment to music education is more important than ever as students returned to in-person learning increasingly in need of environments that support their mental health and well-being. The music classroom provides such an environment. Studies have shown that, when compared to other students, students with high arts engagement (including music) exhibit higher levels of self-concept in how they value themselves, increased abilities in performance skills and self-evaluation, a stronger tendency to employ empathetic thinking, and more opportunity to develop interpersonal skills.

After weathering a global pandemic and facing challenges in teacher recruitment and retention, America’s education system needs robust federal support. This school year, all 50 states reported teacher shortages in at least one subject area. A recent study found a severe lack of qualified education
professionals across the United States, with over 200,000 positions either vacant or filled by underqualified teachers. Factors such as low pay and poor working conditions for educators have contributed to the teacher shortage, which will only worsen without substantial and sustained federal investments in education.

The House FY 2024 LHSSE appropriations bill would have devastating impacts on America’s education system, with its effects felt most deeply in districts with a high percentage of low-income families. It would slash Title I funding, severely limiting the support available to disadvantaged students; it would eliminate Title II which has been instrumental in maintaining a quality educator workforce and combatting the teacher shortage; it would eliminate several programs focused on providing support to teachers from diverse backgrounds, stifling efforts to diversify the teaching profession; and it would ensure school districts have less funds to support a well-rounded education that includes music

On behalf of parents, students, communities, and the undersigned organizations advocating for all students to have access to a comprehensive music education, we urge you to reverse the devastating cuts proposed in the FY 2024 House LHHSE appropriations bill and do everything in your power to ensure much needed federal funding continues beyond the September 30 deadline.

Should you have any questions, please contact Amanda Karhuse, NAfME Assistant Executive Director for Advocacy and Public Policy, at amandak@nafme.org.

Sincerely,

American Eurythmics Society
American Kodaly Educators
Americans for the Arts
Church Music Publishers Association
CMA Foundation
Collaborative Films
Education Through Music
El Sistema USA
Feierabend Association for Music Education
HBCU National Band and Orchestra Director’s Association
Jazz Education Network
JazzSLAM
Kennedy Violins
League of American Orchestras
Music and the Brain
MusicConstructED
Music Publishers Association
Music Teachers National Association
Music Travel Consultants
National Association for Music Education
National Association for the Study and Performance of African American Music
National Association of Music Merchants
National Concerts
National Music Council
New Harmony Line
Organization of American Kodaly Educators
Opera on Tap/Playground Opera
Percussive Arts Society
Rock and Soul Forever Foundation
Rhythm and Blues Preservation Society
Sankofa Songs
Save the Music Foundation
Teachrock.org