



National School Boards Association
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March 26, 2026

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair, U.S. House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Re: NSBA's Fiscal Year 2027 Education Funding Priorities

Dear Chair Cole:

On behalf of the National School Boards Association (NSBA) and the thousands of school board members who lead the nation's 13,000 public school districts, we thank you for maintaining a strong commitment to students in the fiscal year 2026 budget. We deeply appreciate your work to sustain key federal education investments, while also exercising stronger oversight, including attending to the Trump Administration's use of interagency agreements affecting the U.S. Department of Education and oversight of competitive grantmaking. As you begin work on FY 2027 appropriations, we respectfully offer the following school board priorities to support students, educators, and communities nationwide.

Increase Federal Investment to Meet the Promise of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):

Federal funding has long fallen short of Congress's commitment to cover 40 percent of the additional cost of educating students qualified to receive IDEA assistance, placing significant strain on local school system budgets. Research underscores that equitable funding is foundational to student success and must account for the greater needs of students requiring additional supports (NSBA Center for Public Education, *Drivers of Student Success*, 2026). NSBA urges Congress to increase IDEA funding and support modernization efforts that improve coordination with families, reduce administrative burden, and strengthen student outcomes. These investments are especially important given the rising number of students identified to receive IDEA services and persistent shortages of special education teachers and specialized instructional support personnel.

Invest in Expanding, Strengthening, and Retaining the Educator Workforce:

Many school districts across the country continue to face acute workforce shortages, particularly in high-need fields such as special education, STEM, and rural education. Effective teachers are among the most important school-based factors influencing student learning. Yet, students in high-poverty schools are less likely to have access to fully qualified educators (NSBA Center for Public Education, *Drivers of Student Success*, 2026). Robust funding for ESEA Title II-A and the Teacher Quality Partnerships program is essential to strengthen educator preparation, support ongoing professional development, and improve


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retention. As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly integrated into teaching and learning, federal investments should also support high-quality professional development that equips educators with the knowledge and skills to use AI effectively, responsibly, and in ways that enhance student learning.

Continue Investments in ESEA Title I and Career and Technical Education (CTE):

Sustained and increased funding for Title I remains critical to addressing persistent inequities in access to resources and academic opportunities. Research shows that schools serving higher concentrations of low-income students often receive fewer resources despite greater need, underscoring the importance of targeted federal investment (NSBA Center for Public Education, *Drivers of Student Success*, 2026). At the same time, increased investments in CTE are essential to preparing students for high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand careers. Together, these programs help school districts meet both access and workforce readiness goals that are vital to the nation’s economic future.

Promote Digital Access, Digital Literacy, and Cybersecurity:

Reliable connectivity, strong digital literacy, and secure school district networks are foundational to modern schools and to ensuring equitable access to high-level curriculum and learning opportunities (NSBA Center for Public Education, *Drivers of Student Success*, 2026). NSBA urges continued federal investment in expanding broadband access, strengthening digital literacy through programs like ESEA Title IV-A, including a focus on privacy and online safety, and enhancing cybersecurity protections for school systems. As cyber threats targeting schools continue to grow in frequency and sophistication, targeted investments to educate students and personnel about these threats are critical to protecting sensitive data and ensuring the continuity of school district operations.

Expand Investments in Student Health, Wellness, and Safety:

Student mental health and well-being are central to academic success and long-term outcomes. Research highlights the importance of positive school climate and supportive environments in driving student achievement, attendance, and engagement (NSBA Center for Public Education, *Drivers of Student Success*, 2026). Schools often serve as the primary access point for mental health services for many students. NSBA urges Congress to strengthen investments in school-based mental health services, counseling, and related supports, as well as broader efforts to ensure safe and supportive learning environments for all students.

Oppose the Diversion of Federal Funds to Private School Vouchers:

NSBA urges Congress to maintain its longstanding commitment to public education by ensuring that federal education funds are directed to public schools, where most students are educated. Research and policy analysis emphasize the importance of maintaining equitable funding systems and accountability for public resources (NSBA Center for Public Education, *Drivers of Student Success*, 2026). We respectfully oppose efforts to divert limited federal resources to private school voucher programs, which risk undermining the stability, equity, and effectiveness of public schools.

These priorities reflect the needs and experiences of school board members working to support students in communities across the country. NSBA stands ready to work with Congress to ensure that FY 2027 appropriations strengthen public education, support educators, and improve outcomes for all students.

Please let us know if it would be helpful to arrange time to discuss these recommendations. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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