



March 15, 2016

The Honorable Tom Cole
United States House of Representatives
2467 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
United States House Representatives
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

I am writing on behalf of the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) to urge the Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee to provide at least \$1.65 billion for the new Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant (SSAEG). 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 10 million students across the United States and see first hand how technology is transforming learning. Technology serves as a powerful tool for promoting educational opportunities when it is used appropriately. Our members also recognize that the nation's education technology infrastructure is insufficient and distributed inequitably to meet schools' growing needs, leaving many communities behind their more affluent peers. As we raise expectations for what students need to know and be able to do for success after graduation, we must also set a higher bar for the nation's technology infrastructure and related professional development required to enable its effective use for teaching and learning.

The absence of robust education technology, and related professional development for teachers and school leaders, not only impacts instruction and decision making, but also jeopardizes implementation of foundational federal policies, such as using assessments to support learning and promote accountability. Time is of the essence. A recent analysis showed that more state standardized tests for elementary and middle schools will be administered this school year using technology, rather than traditional printed exams. This trend includes important benefits for students, schools, and communities, but many states—including Florida, Minnesota, Montana, and Wisconsin—recently experienced serious problems when administering their online tests, including cyber attacks and technical errors, which undermine the assessment process.

While a range of federal, State, and local investments will be needed to equip schools with the technology required for modern learning, the SSAEG program can serve as a helpful tool for districts facing technology equity challenges. The program must, however, be sufficiently funded – consistent with the authorization level established by Congress late last year - to meaningfully and timely update the nation’s education technology infrastructure. Thank you for carefully considering this important national need as you develop the FY 2017 Department of Education budget.

Sincerely,

Keith Krueger
Chief Executive Officer
CoSN

Cc: House Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee