July 15, 2010

Dear Senator,

The undersigned organizations representing the broad range of stakeholders in the education community applaud the U.S. House of Representatives for including in the supplemental appropriations bill a $10 billion Education Jobs Fund to stave off massive educator layoffs and $4.95 billion to address the Pell Grant funding shortfall that threatens to cut grants to eight million college students. We urge the Senate to follow suit, by crafting a bill that can pass the Senate, address these two pending crises and be signed into law as quickly as possible.

By all accounts, hundreds of thousands of teachers, principals and other school personnel are at grave risk due to ongoing state and local fiscal crises. Without question, layoffs of this magnitude will have long-term negative consequences for our nation’s children and will no doubt impede federal efforts to emerge from the economic recession that has plagued our nation. As a united community, we urge swift Senate action to ensure that the Education Jobs Fund reaches schoolhouse doors before local communities are forced to implement massive layoffs and dramatic program cuts that will harm children and impede progress on needed education reforms.

As the economy has struggled, more and more students have become eligible for Pell Grant funding, resulting in a $5.7 billion shortfall. If we do not act, Pell Grant awards will be slashed by significant amounts, threatening the promise of college attainment for those students who have earned a space in higher education through hard-work and perseverance. Moreover, a failure to address the Pell Grant issue now will only lead to tougher choices when the Appropriations process moves forward. As a united community, we urge swift Senate action to ensure that college opportunity is not denied to more worthy students on the basis of financial limitations.

While signs of economic recovery are evident at the national level, states still face a cumulative budget gap of $200 billion for fiscal year 2010 and $180 billion for fiscal year 2011. Thirty-four states cut funding for K-12 education in 2010 and over 30 states are already planning additional cuts for both K-12 and higher education for fiscal year 2011. Budgetary shortfalls will result in larger class sizes and cut backs to core enrichment activities, even though we can now quantify the enormous positive impact that education yields on our economy. Economic recovery will certainly slow if we allow public sector unemployment to grow through increased layoffs. Cutting education funds and services will only hurt our long-term economic security as the dropout crisis magnifies unemployment over time.

The Education Jobs Fund will distribute monies in the same manner as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) which has already been credited with saving over 300,000 education jobs. This program worked as it was intended and can continue to do so, if the Senate acts quickly. We stand firmly behind the passage of an Education Jobs Fund and the Pell grant shortfall
funds. Because some have concerns with the education offsets in the House-passed supplemental, we urge the Senate to work with the House and the Administration to craft a package that can garner the needed votes for swift passage. We believe that through collaboration we can move this bill forward in a timely manner, save jobs, ensure college opportunity, and improve education for all of America’s students.

We ask that you act in the interest of our nation’s students and the teachers and other dedicated employees who serve them admirably every day.

Sincerely,
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of School Administrators
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Association of University Women
American Dance Therapy Association
American Federation of School Administrators, AFL-CIO
American Federation of Teachers
American School Counselor Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Americans for Religious Liberty
Association of American Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of School Business Officials International
Association of Teacher Educators
Coalition of Higher Education Assistance Organizations
Committee for Education Funding
Council for Exceptional Children
Council for Opportunity in Education
Council of Chief State School Officers
Council of Great City Schools
Florida State University
International Society for Technology in Education
Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Alliance of Black School Educators
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Private Special Education Centers
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National Council for the Social Studies
National Education Association
National School Boards Association
New York University
School Social Work Association of America
State Educational Technology Directors Association