Dear Chairwoman DeLauro, Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Cole, and Ranking Member Blunt:

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 appropriations bill for the U.S. Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, the undersigned organizations encourage you to significantly increase funding for the Full-Service Community Schools Program (Title IV Part F of the Every Student Succeeds Act) to match President Biden’s 2022 budget request of $443 million. Community schools is a critical strategy to help schools and communities recover and stabilize from the ongoing effects of the pandemic, and an effective strategy of a whole-child approach to public education that is necessary now more than ever.

The pandemic has shown how critical effective coordination of school-family-community partnerships are to supporting students’ and families’ basic needs, student re-engagement, and learning both during crises like the pandemic and beyond. Pre-pandemic there were over 40,000 Title I schools with concentrations of students in poverty who would significantly benefit from the coordinated and enhanced supports and enrichment that community schools provide. Yet, the program’s current level of $30 million was only able to fund 18 new grantees in 2020, which is a drop in the bucket compared to the needs and demand for the strategy that we are seeing across the country coming through the pandemic.

Research and evaluations show community schools are an effective, evidence-based strategy for school improvement and we can point to several examples of the power of community schools to transform high-poverty, low-performing schools into thriving schools including a recent RAND study of NYC’s community schools. They are also a smart investment: the coordination of resources at both the school and system levels translates to a return on investment of over $7 for every $1 invested in a Coordinator’s salary.

Throughout the pandemic, community schools were able to mobilize quickly and effectively to support the social, emotional, physical, and learning needs of students and their families. Community schools are demonstrating, from Florida and North Carolina to New York and elsewhere, how their strong relationships, relational trust, agility, and coordination are helping schools and their communities better respond to and recover from the pandemic. At Ganesha High School in Pomona, CA, when one student’s mother died from Covid and their father was on a ventilator, staff and community partners of this community school dropped off groceries and connected the family to counseling, and mobilized emergency aid to address the hospital bills so the family could stay in their home. Similarly, in Washington’s Renton school district, when a single parent of three needed emotional and parenting
support, the community school’s coordinator mobilized a “wraparound team” for the mother involving herself, a school counselor, and a therapist to provide parenting sessions, therapy, and general wellness check-ins that has enabled this parent to better support herself and her children. Significantly increasing funding for the Full-Service Community Schools program would enable hundreds more communities to coordinate the assets of their schools, families, and community partners for students’ immediate and long-term success.

President Biden recognized this critical role of Community Schools in his FY 2022 budget request, calling for $443 million for the program in contrast to its current level of $30 million. Similarly, Congress has highlighted Community Schools as an effective strategy in the past few months: first through federal legislation -the Full-Service Community Schools Expansion Act (S. 385/H.R. 1241)- that calls for $500 million for the program and increasing to $1 billion by 2025; and through reference in the American Rescue Plan of community schools as an allowable use of funds for school districts for mental health services.

We support the President’s budget request of $443 million for FY 2022 and request that you match this amount for the program in the FY 2022 appropriations process. The Full-Service Community Schools Expansion Act noted above provides an effective path and structure for this increased investment and this level of funding would also help to meet the need and demand for the program from communities across the country.

We thank you for your continued support of Community Schools in your states and in general, and for your continued advocacy for children and families. We look forward to working with you to ensure all students are supported by their schools and communities working together to help them achieve success during and beyond their time in public education.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
American Federation of Teachers
Boston College Center for Optimized Student Support
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Center For Popular Democracy
Center for Youth & Community Leadership in Education (CYCLE) at Roger Williams University
City Year Inc.
Coalition for Community Schools
Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
Communities In Schools National Office
Council on Accreditation
Education Redesign Lab, Harvard
First Focus on Children
Forum for Youth Investment
GLSEN
Healthy Schools Campaign
Institute for Educational Leadership
In The Public Interest
Journey for Justice Alliance
National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement (NAFSCE)
National Association of Counsel for Children
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
National Center for Community Schools
National Center for Youth Law
National Children's Campaign
National Urban League
National Youth Advocate Program, Inc.
NEA Foundation
Netter Center
Nexus Family Healing
One Hope United
Organizations Concerned About Rural Education
Prepared To Teach, Bank Street College of Education
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Rural School and Community Trust
School Culture and Climate Initiative
Schott Foundation for Public Education
Southern Education Foundation
Structured Solutions Educational Consulting, LLC
Student Voice
Teach Plus
Teacher-Powered Schools
YMCA of the USA

State Organizations

Abbott Leadership Institute
AFT MA, President
Alliance for Quality Education
AR Hunger Relief Alliance
Arkansas Coalition for Community Schools
Arkansas United Alas/wings program
California AfterSchool Network
Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations
Children & Families First
Children's Home Society of Florida
Citizens' Committee for Children of NY
Communities In Schools of Pennsylvania
Communities In Schools of Tennessee
Communities In Schools of Virginia
Dual Language Education of New Mexico
Excel by Eight
Florida State University College of Medicine
ForwARd Arkansas
HawaiiKidsCAN
Idaho Coalition for Community Schools
Illinois Federation of Teachers
Indiana Community Schools Network
Latino Institute, Inc.
Los Angeles Education Partnership
Maryland Coalition for Community Schools
Maryland Out of School Time Network
Massachusetts Advocates for Children
New Jersey Education Association
NJ Association of School Administrators
NJ Community Schools Coalition
NYS Network for Youth Success, Inc.
Public Advocates
Rural Community Alliance
Rural Schools Assn of NYS
Save Our Schools NJ Community Organizing
Starr Commonwealth
Teach Plus Massachusetts
Tennessee Community Schools State Network
Texas American Federation of Teachers
The Wei LLC

Local Organizations

ABC Community School Partnership, NM
Achievement Plus Initiative, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, MN
Batavia City School District, NY
Batesville School District, AR
Binghamton University Community Schools, NY
Civic Nebraska
Communities In Schools of Eastern PA
Communities in Schools of Milledgeville/Baldwin County
Communities In Schools of Renton-Tukwila
Communities in Schools of the Twin Cities
Cradle 2 Career, Rochester, MN
Family Service Lincoln NE
Greater Gallatin United Way, MT
Horseshoe Bend School District, ID
Indianapolis Coalition for Community School Partnerships
Irvington NAACP
Kent School Services Network, MI
Knox Education Foundation, TN
Lincoln Community Foundation, NE
Little Rock School District, AR
Malone Center, NE
MCCOY (Marion County Commission on Youth, Inc.), IN
Mercer Street Friends, NJ
Metro Nashville Public Schools/Community Achieves
National Network of Beacons
Northside Neighborhood House, TN
Pathways to Prosperity, Inc., FL
Paterson Education Foundation, Inc.
Rochester Public Schools
South Bend Community School Corporation
United Federation of Teachers / United Community Schools
United Way of Greater Toledo
United Way of Treasure Valley
United Way for Greater Austin
United Way for Southeastern Michigan
United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County
United Way of Buffalo and Erie County
United Way of Central Iowa
United Way of Erie County
United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County
United Way of Mason County
United Way of New York City
United Way of Northern Utah & Ogden City School District
United Way of Olmsted County
United Way of Racine County
United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley
United Way of the National Capital Area
Willard Community Center, NE
YMCA of Greater Erie
Youth & Family Services Division, Multnomah County, Oregon
Young Audiences New York
Zone 126, NY