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United States Senate

February 13, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-128 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-146A U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Senate Appropriations Committee
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
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Senate Appropriations Committee
154 Russell Senate Office Building
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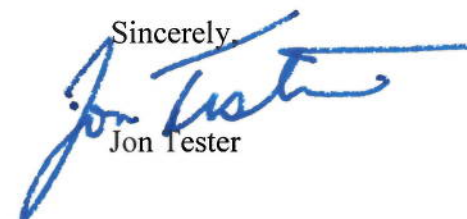
Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Blunt, and Ranking Member Murray:

I write to you regarding the need for significant, increased investments in Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants. When Congress created these grants under Title IV of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), it intended to provide a flexible source of funding that local school districts could use to meet their most urgent needs, including school-based counseling and mental health services. However, while ESSA authorized \$1.6 billion annually to fund these Title IV grants, Congress has only provided \$400 million. This falls far short of ESSA's promise to help meet the mental health needs of our nation's students.

A recent survey in one of Montana's largest school districts showed that in the last year, a full quarter of high school students seriously considered committing suicide. That situation is not unusual or unique—students across Montana are struggling to overcome the impacts of trauma, abuse, substance use, and endemic poverty in their families' lives. They bring these burdens with them into the classroom, where they then struggle to learn. Our public educators are dedicated to helping them overcome these struggles and succeed academically, but they need the resources in order to do so.

Significant funding increases for Title IV grants could help our public schools meet their students' mental health needs and give them the tools they need to succeed. Now that Congress has secured a bipartisan budget agreement, we have the ability to make much-needed investments in public education. I urge you to prioritize investments in Title IV grants, which could be a literal lifeline for many American children.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester

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