

# TITLE IV-A

# COALITION

## Title IV, Part A of ESSA: Student Support and Academic Enrichments Grants

### Description

The bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) includes a flexible block grant program under Title IV Part A, which is authorized at \$1.6 billion in FY 2018. Title IV, Part A authorizes activities in three broad areas:

1. Providing students with a well-rounded education (e.g., college and career counseling, STEM, including computer science, music and arts, civics, IB/AP)
2. Supporting safe and healthy students (e.g., comprehensive school mental health, drug and violence prevention, training on trauma-informed practices, health and physical education) and
3. Supporting the effective use of technology (e.g., professional development, blended learning, and purchase of devices).

### Distribution of Funds

ESSA stipulates that each state will receive an allocation based on the Title I funding formula. Using the same Title I formula, the states will then allocate funds to school districts.

Any school district that receives a formula allocation above \$30,000 must conduct a needs assessment and then must expend 20 percent of its grant on safe and healthy school activities and 20 percent on activities to provide a well-rounded education. The remaining 60 percent of the allocation may be spent on all three priorities, including technology. However, there is a 15 percent cap on devices, equipment, software, and digital content.

If a district receives an allocation below \$30,000, the law does not require a needs assessment or setting aside percentages for well-rounded and safe and healthy student programs. However, it must still direct the funds it receives toward activities in at least one of the three categories. The 15 percent technology purchase cap would continue to apply.

### FY17 Appropriations

The SSAE grant program only received \$400 million in FY 2017. Funding this program at less than 25% of its authorized level in its first year has presented serious implementation issues, including the need to allow states to allocate funds to districts competitively in order to give districts the opportunity to make meaningful investments in at least a handful of districts. Many districts will not receive the statutory minimums under ESSA and some will receive no funding at all due to this extremely low funding level.

### FY18 Appropriations Proposals

**POTUS Budget Request:** The President's request to completely eliminate this program—before districts have had a chance to implement the program—stands in stark contrast to both the will of Congress and the President's publicly stated intentions to provide states and districts enhanced flexibility over education.

If the program were eliminated it would mean that not a single district in the country will receive federal support for the critical education programs meant to be supported by SSAE funds include: 1) safe and healthy students activities, such as providing mental health services to students; 2) increasing student access to STEM, computer science and accelerated learning courses, physical education, the arts, music, foreign languages, and college and career counseling; funds for an effective school library program; and, 3) providing students with access to technology and digital materials and educators with technology professional development

opportunities. Further, given the limited amount of state and local dollars to support these programs, providing no supplemental funding would force school districts to choose between high-quality programs that positively impact students in different ways – trading off school counseling services for Advanced Placement programs, for instance, thereby jeopardizing the greater flexibility for districts and schools that Congress intended.

**House and Senate Allocations:** The House proposed \$500 million (a \$100 million increase over FY17) and the Senate proposed \$450 million (\$50 million over FY17) in the LHHS-Ed bills for FY18. While these levels are increases, they are still several hundreds of millions below the necessary levels needed to implement the SSAE program as intended by Congress so that all eligible districts receive the statutory minimums and have the flexibility to make meaningful investments in the areas the program supports.

### **Program Funding Need**

Strong evidence underscores the need for students to have access to programs that meet their comprehensive needs, including their mental and physical health and safety and providing a challenging learning environment that effectively uses technology.

Evidence supports a direct correlation between physical and mental health and learning that is essential to academic success, school completion, and the development of healthy, resilient, and productive citizens. Schools are uniquely positioned to promote student engagement and help them acquire life-long knowledge and skills through comprehensive health education, physical education, nutrition, comprehensive school mental and behavioral health services, counseling, and integration among all education and health programs.

In order to prepare all students for success in school and in life, they need access to a well-rounded and challenging curriculum. Funds through the block grant will help schools expand music, art, STEM, computer science, accelerated learning, history, and civics courses, as well as expand access to college and career guidance and counseling.

Federal investments in education technology ensure schools have technology-proficient educators, well equipped classrooms, sufficiently supported administrative structures, and a curriculum optimized to take advantage of the benefits technology offers to all students—such as closing opportunity and learning gaps and providing students with essential modern workforce skills.

Given the elimination through ESSA of numerous programs that support the overall health and safety of students, the investments in education technology, as well as helping districts ensure access to a well-rounded education, a robust federal investment in support of these programs is essential through Title IV, Part A. Without a significant investment in Title IV, Part A, districts will be forced to choose among competing priorities—even though an ample investment in all three is necessary to providing students with a comprehensive education.

For further information, or if any questions arise, please contact any member of the Title IV Part A Coalition Steering Committee listed below.

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