

COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION FUNDING

November 15, 2011

Dear Representative:

The Committee for Education Funding (CEF), a coalition of 90 education associations and institutions from preschool to postgraduate education, is writing to express our strong opposition to H.J. Res. 2, a proposed Constitutional amendment requiring a balanced federal budget.

This amendment would likely result in draconian cuts in funding for education and other domestic programs, thereby undermining economic growth, job development and global competitiveness.

If passed by Congress and ratified by the States, H.J. Res. 2 could result in a balanced federal budget as early as Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 (“the fifth fiscal year beginning after ratification”). Even the House-passed Budget Resolution does not achieve a balanced budget until sometime after FY 2030.

Thus, H.J. Res. 2 would require far deeper and more harmful cuts to education and other programs than the House-passed Budget, which would reduce funding for education and related programs by more than 25 percent or \$250 billion over ten years. The House-passed Budget Resolution also slashes Pell grants for college students by cutting the maximum Pell grant award by \$2,510 (-45 percent), adversely affecting over nine million low- and middle-income students.

The most likely outcome would be similar to that proposed in the Republican Study Committee (RSC) budget. That budget would achieve balance in FY 2020 and would cut non-defense discretionary outlays by 70 percent compared to the CBO baseline for FY 2020.

Cuts of this magnitude to early childhood, elementary and secondary, career and technical, adult, and higher education programs would completely reverse progress on improving student achievement, closing achievement gaps and increasing high school graduation, postsecondary education attendance and college completion rates. These cuts will also jeopardize America’s global competitiveness and economic future.

Students, educators, schools and colleges are facing multiple funding cliffs both from the termination of funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and deep cuts in state and local aid due to unprecedented and continuing state budget gaps and depressed property values. Educators and students are grappling with layoffs, larger class sizes, narrowing of the curriculum, elimination of after-school programs, rising tuition due to state budget cuts and lack of capacity at community colleges to meet growing demand.

In addition, the FY 2011 Continuing Resolution (CR) cut education programs (exclusive of changes to Pell grants) by an aggregate \$1.25 billion with more than three dozen education programs eliminated and another four dozen cut. While the Pell grant maximum award of \$5,550 has been maintained, it has come at the expense of the summer Pell award and Leveraging Education Assistance Program (LEAP), which were eliminated in the FY 2011 CR, and the in-school interest exemption for graduate students which was eliminated in the Budget Control Act. In fact, college students have already contributed \$4.6 billion out of their pockets to deficit reduction.

For the sake of our students, schools and colleges, as well as America's future, we strongly urge you to vote against this harmful balanced budget constitutional amendment.

Sincerely,

Abigail Evans
President

Joel Packer
Executive Director