



CONSORTIUM *of* SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 2, 2015

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## COSSA Statement on the House & Senate FY 2016 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Acts

The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) appreciates the hard work of both the House (draft) and Senate (S. 1695) Appropriations Subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) in drafting fiscal year (FY) 2016 appropriations legislation for the departments under their jurisdiction. In particular, we applaud the support of both Appropriations Committees for the biomedical, behavioral, and social science research funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Unfortunately, the much-needed increases in NIH funding in both bills come at the expense of federal agencies whose work plays a vital and collaborative role in the U.S. scientific enterprise, particularly as it relates to our nation's health. As such, COSSA cannot support either appropriations bill.

COSSA is particularly concerned by the proposal to eliminate the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) in the House bill, both bills' inadequate funding of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Institute of Education Science (IES), and restrictions placed on research conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Further, while we recognize that the *Budget Control Act* imposes caps on domestic discretionary spending that make it difficult to provide much needed investments in research, the House and Senate bills still do not go far enough to ensure U.S. global competitiveness in R&D. Due to looming sequestration cuts and the proposed reductions targeted at statistical agencies and agencies that support social and behavioral science research within the bill, COSSA is forced to oppose both the House and Senate's FY 2016 Labor-HHS bills in their entirety.

**NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH.** COSSA appreciates the Committees' investments in NIH, with the House bill providing \$100 million more than the President's request and the Senate bill increasing NIH's budget by \$2 billion above the FY 2015 funding level and \$900 million more than the House proposal. We further commend the House and Senate Appropriations Committees for their continued bipartisan support for NIH and determination to provide the resources needed to maintain NIH's role as the world's premier biomedical and behavioral research institution under the current fiscal constraints. To ensure this position on the global stage, the NIH must continue to support all scientific disciplines engaged in the biomedical research enterprise, including the behavioral and social sciences.

**AGENCY FOR HEALTHCARE RESEARCH AND QUALITY.** The House's Labor-HHS bill would terminate the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. As the only federal agency with the sole mission of conducting research on the U.S. health care system, AHRQ produces invaluable evidence that tells us how we can improve the quality of health care in America and make it safer and more affordable, equitable, and accessible. Eliminating this agency means that we will miss a step in the process of discovering new cures and treatments to actually getting them to the people who need them, efficiently and effectively.

While the Senate bill maintains funding for AHRQ, the proposed 35% cut would compromise AHRQ's ability to carry out its mission. The choice in both bills to disregard the important role health services research plays in improving health care in America is misguided and short-sighted.

**CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION.** While COSSA appreciates the overall increase in funding to the CDC in the House's bill, language in the Committee Report places restrictions on the types of research the

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agency can undertake. The House's continuation of the prohibition on gun violence prevention research and its failure to provide funding for environmental health research continues a worrying trend of Congress picking winners and losers among areas of scientific research. Decisions about what topics are worthy of research funding should be made among experts in relevant scientific fields.

The appropriation for the CDC in the Senate bill would impose cuts on the agency responsible for ensuring America's public health. Of particular concern is the proposed \$10 million cut to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), the nation's principal health statistics agency.

**BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS.** Neither the House nor Senate bill provides adequate funding for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. BLS is the principal statistical agency responsible for measuring labor market activity, working conditions, and price changes in the economy. BLS's funding has not kept pace with inflation; its declining purchasing power has left it increasingly unable to fulfill its basic responsibilities. The funding levels proposed in the House and Senate Labor-HHS bills could force the Bureau to make cuts to its core surveys and data programs, leaving the many users of its data without the information they need to make decisions that affect America's global competitiveness.

**INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES.** The House bill reduces the Institute of Education Sciences' budget to \$410 million, \$164 million and 27% below the FY 2015 level. IES provides critical new research-based knowledge to educators and policymakers throughout the country. The dramatic reduction of IES' budget would have a devastating impact on all components of IES, including the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Center for Education Research (NCER), National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER), National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), and Research, Development, and Dissemination, among other programs under IES's jurisdiction. Further, given that education is local, COSSA and its members believe the House's proposed the elimination of the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs), a network of ten regional laboratories, is misguided and precludes an important opportunity to address and understand the many factors associated with educating our nation's most precious resource—its children—at the level required to make significant improvements.

The Senate version of the bill would provide IES with \$153 million more than the House bill; however, the mark is still 16.7% below the President's request. COSSA appreciates the Senate Committee's foresight in maintaining the funding for the Regional Educational Labs. However, we are very concerned that the bill proposes deep cuts to the International Education and Foreign Language Studies program, as well as proposals in the House and Senate bills to eliminate the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, including the First in the World program, which is a competitive grant program designed to find solutions to challenges faced by students in completing postsecondary education.

COSSA urges Members of Congress to oppose the FY 2016 House and Senate Labor-HHS bills in their current form.

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