

TALKING POINTS FOR AESA HILL MEETINGS

As we reflect on the issues the AESA Advocacy Team weighed in on last quarter, we wanted to present you with a few talking points for your meetings on the Hill. You don't have to mention any of these issues unless you want to, but in case they come up or you find they resonate with the issues your ESA is facing or are concerned with, please feel free to use them.

FEDERAL FUNDING

AESA was pleased to see federal education funding finalized in December. We appreciate that this is the third-largest increase for ED since FY11 (the year that ED funding started being cut or frozen) and that Congress rejected the draconian cuts to critical programs proposed by the Trump Administration as well as their continued efforts to further advance their flawed privatization agenda.

- Thank you for prioritizing new dollars to our key signature formula programs: IDEA and Title I.
- While IDEA received a 3% increase, this increase is only a little better than inflation, which is projected to be 2% in 2020. Effectively, this means that IDEA is only receiving a real increase of 1.2% while the number of children with disabilities districts are educating continues to increase.
- In addition, we appreciate the extension of funding for the Secure Rural Schools program, which is critical to 4,400 school districts in 41 states.

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT REAUTHORIZATION

AESA understands that the Senate does not plan to take up a reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) this Congress. However, we want to re-affirm our priorities for HEA reauthorization as stated in our 2019 Legislative Agenda. We hope the bipartisan HEA will:

- Ensure ESAs are eligible for grants and serve as educator licensing entities.
- Ensure that ESAs coordinate collaboration with PK-16.
- Support programs that assist and develop students entering and completing college and post-secondary programs.
- Protect and expand public service loan forgiveness programs for all educators.
- Allow all prep/licensure candidates to be eligible for federal student loans and grants, including alternative licensure programs.
- Ensure flexibility of federal grants and loans to be available for educators and educator candidates regardless of age or current school enrollment.
- Simplify the application and access procedures for the public service loan forgiveness programs.
- Protect and preserve student aid (grants and loan) programs aimed at future educators.
- Incentivize salaries for educators in rural areas.

MEDICAID

Medicaid is the third-largest federal funding stream for school systems, yet many rural and small districts struggle to access this critical funding stream. AESA believes changes must be made quickly that would reduce the paperwork burden for all sized districts and ESAs that rely on Medicaid funding to meet the physical and mental health needs of students. Since CMS believes it cannot act to issue guidance that would provide states with the flexibility to streamline the Medicaid reimbursement system, bipartisan legislation led by Sen. Portman and Sen. Cortez-Mastro in the Senate and Rep. Tonko and Rep. Burgess in the House should be quickly introduced that will give states the option to make changes that would alleviate the paperwork burden for ESAs and increase their access to Medicaid funding.