



OUR TAKE

Melinda George

Educators have the clout to carry our message to Congress

In March 2017, the education community woke to a daunting professional learning crisis: The Trump Administration's 2018 budget proposed elimination of the Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants Program (Title II, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act). As educators face increasingly higher demands for student outcomes in a more diverse population, it's astonishing that the administration would even consider eliminating the only dedicated source of federal funding for professional learning and educator support.

For several months, Learning Forward has been asking each of you to help us contact every member of the U.S. Congress to let them know how critical Title IIA funds are to your work, your students, and your communities. If this is the first time you've been directly asked to advocate for any cause, you may be asking, "Who, me? What could I possibly share that would be of interest to lawmakers?" I'm here to tell you that you are perfect for this job.

As experts in education and as voters, you are exactly the right messengers to help lawmakers understand that Title IIA funding is critical to our country's educational and economic success.

Lawmakers are not often educators, and their insight (and that of their staff) is limited to their own experiences as students. The educational climate has changed since they, and likely even since their children have been in school. Your voice, impact data, and stories can help them appreciate what is actually



Your participation is already making a difference — we have confirmation from Senate staff that they are hearing from our community.

Learn more about advocating for Title II and increased spending caps at www.learningforward.org/advocacy.

happening in today's classrooms, schools, and communities. You are particularly qualified to highlight where real needs exist.

Members of Congress and their staff want to hear from you whether they support Title IIA funding or are opposed to it. As supporters, they will use your experiences to make the case for Title IIA funding amongst their colleagues. If they are opposed, they need to understand clearly what the consequences would be if this critical funding were eliminated. We're turning our efforts toward asking Congress to increase overall spending caps so that enough money is available within the budget to support Title IIA going into the future.

Your participation is already making a difference — we have confirmation from Senate staff that they are hearing from our community about Title IIA. And, thanks in part to your powerful stories, the Senate included level funding for Title IIA in their version of the appropriations bill. But this is an ongoing battle, not simply a one-time fight. We all need to be vigilant and determined to see this through for the long-term. Whether for Title II or for other education priorities, we will always need to make the case that professional learning requires ongoing, significant support whether at the national, provincial, state, or local levels. Thank you for bringing your clout to the conversation.

Melinda George (melinda.george@learningforward.org) is Learning Forward's director of policy and partnerships. ■