July 14, 2017

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of America’s 19,000 cities and towns, I write to thank Labor-HHS Subcommittee Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro for advancing a FY 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Bill that preserves funding for city priorities, like the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) and Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), among others, that were targeted in the President’s budget proposal. At the same time, city leaders remain concerned that the bill lacks robust funding for programs that have had a tremendous impact on the lives of our most vulnerable citizens, and shifts the cost of intergovernmental projects and services from the federal level to municipal governments. For many cities, particularly small and rural communities with a limited tax-base, the cost shift may be too great to be made up for with local revenue.

Cities are where the job market, and the economy, are growing. Cities are home to 86% of the nation’s population; 88% of total real income; and 91% of real gross domestic product. Local governments invest $7 trillion annually on services residents expect. Cities lead on initiatives tied to public health and workforce development, education and afterschool. With over ten million children participating in afterschool programs each year, and nearly 20 million children waiting to get in, cities are committed to meeting that need and others across the health, education and social services spectrum. Now is the wrong time for Congress to stall these advances by pulling back on critical investments in cities.
While we congratulate the Subcommittee for rejecting the elimination of numerous key programs slated for elimination in the President’s budget proposal, as well as the inclusion of funds to address the opioid epidemic as authorized in the 21st Century Cures Act and the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, we are concerned about the proposed cuts to vital education and training programs. Specifically, the bill calls for a $432 million cut to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs, a $191 million cut to 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding, which would ensure close to 200,000 children would lose access to quality afterschool and summer programs nationwide next year, and elimination of Title II, Part A funding of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which provides funding for professional development for educators, class-size reduction, educator recruitment and retention, and mentoring.

As the voice of America’s cities in Washington, NLC appreciates the work of the committee to preserve LIHEAP, SSBG, CNCS, and other programs important to cities and towns. We look forward to working with Appropriations Committee members in both Chambers to raise budget caps to a level sufficient to meet the responsibilities that citizens expect from their elected representatives. And we urge every Member of Congress to seek the direct feedback of local elected officials in their home states and congressional districts. Please consider NLC a resource to that end by contacting Stephanie Martinez-Ruckman, NLC’s Program Director for Human Development, at 202-626-3098 or martinez-ruckman@nlc.org.

Sincerely,

Clarence E. Anthony
CEO and Executive Director