



December 17, 2015

THE CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT OF 2016 (H.R. 2029)

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, we write to express our qualified support for the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 (H.R. 2029) (Omnibus). Although this is not the clean budget we would have wanted, nor are all of the programs and agencies that provide critical services to the communities that The Leadership Conference represents well-funded, we are pleased that the \$1.15 trillion Omnibus raises the sequester caps for non-defense discretionary spending, providing much needed investment in, and relief to, our communities. We believe that many programs that directly help our communities will benefit greatly from the increases due to the lifting of the caps on non-defense discretionary spending. This compromise budget is much better than it could have been. We therefore urge you to vote for the Omnibus.

The Leadership Conference applauds the advocates both inside and outside of Congress who ensured that the number of ideological riders that could hurt the diverse communities we represent is minimal in the final budget deal, and commend all those who worked to pass the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 (BBA). Many programs that help working families and the communities we represent benefited from increased funds available in the Omnibus. These programs include: \$480 million—the highest funding level ever—for grants provided by the Office on Violence Against Women; a necessary ramp-up in funding for the Census Bureau, which is preparing for the 2020 decennial Census; \$2.71 billion for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) grants to states; an increase in funding for Head Start and Title 1 of ESEA; an increase in funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant; and additional funding for New Starts program at the Federal Transit Administration.

However, we remain concerned about several provisions in the Omnibus.

EB-5 Reauthorization: The 10-month clean extension given to the abused, misused, and fraud-ridden EB-5 regional center program means that low-income rural and urban communities will continue to be robbed of the job creation and investment that the program was designed to create. Infrastructure will continue to be put into wealthy areas and not the underserved communities that need it the most. The Leadership Conference continues to believe that the EB-5 regional center program must have a course correction and be returned to its original intent of investing in high poverty and high unemployment communities. The EB-5 regional center program must not be extended again without major reforms to the definition of Targeted Employment Areas (TEAs), significant limitations on gerrymandering, and improved fraud protections.

Government Sponsored Enterprise (GSE) Reform: Stabilizing and reforming our nation's housing finance system is critical to promoting affordable homeownership and protecting

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taxpayers, but the “Jumpstart GSE Reform” provision simply prolongs the 2008 bailout of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, while doing nothing to help Congress invent a better alternative.

Visa Waiver Program: Key changes to the Visa Waiver Program will result in discrimination against some visitors on the basis of national origin, and will penalize other visitors simply for being honest about their prior travels, neither of which will improve national security.

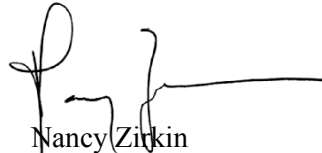
D.C. Home Rule: Barring the District from using its own locally raised revenues for any legal health service usurps the power of the local DC government and infringes on the rights of the District residents.

Despite these problematic provisions in the Omnibus, we support the bill and urge you to vote in favor of it. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, feel free to contact either of us, or Senior Counsel Emily Chatterjee, at (202) 466-3648.

Sincerely,



Wade Henderson
President & CEO



Nancy Zirkin
Executive Vice President