AFL-CIO

LEGISLATIVE ALERT

May 8, 2019

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey, Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
The Capitol H-307
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger, Ranking Minority Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Minority Member Granger:

On behalf of the AFL-CIO, I am writing to express our support for the FY 2020 appropriations bill for the Department of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies (Labor HHS), scheduled for full committee consideration this week. This bill reflects a long awaited boost to labor programs that have been level-funded for years.

We would like to give special thanks to Subcommittee Chair Rep. Rosa DeLauro for listening to the concerns we raised and acknowledging our requests for additional funding. The bill recognizes the importance in investing in workers, worker protections, health, and education, and rejects many of the proposed cuts called for in the administration's budget proposal.

Specifically, the bill provides a total of $13 billion in funding for the Department of Labor, $1.2 billion above the FY 2019 enacted level and $2.4 billion above the administration's budget request. The Employment and Training Administration would get a $709 million boost over the FY 2019 enacted level, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act grants would get a $178 million increase, and Job Corps a $150 million increase.

The bill includes $250 million for registered apprenticeships, a $90 million increase above FY 2019. We support the Committee's mandate to the Department of Labor that these funds be used only for programs registered under the National Apprenticeship Act. In keeping with the purposes of the Act to engage both business and labor, and to ensure that labor intermediaries are given opportunities to apply for competitive grants and contracts, we urge the Committee to require the Secretary to continue funding support for "business and labor" industry partner intermediaries as part of the set-aside for national and local intermediaries. We also suggest that separate funding streams be established for intermediaries at the national and local/state level, and that states be required to engage both business and labor in state apprenticeship expansion grants.

The bill provides a $237 million increase for worker protection agencies. The Wage and Hour Division gets an increase of $69 million, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) received a $103 million increase, the Mine Safety and Health Administration received an increase of $43.5 million, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs received an increase of $17 million, and the International Labor Affairs Bureau gets an increase of $36 million over the 2019 enacted level. The increase in funding comes at a time when OSHA inspection staff is near record low levels and years of stagnant funding have made it impossible for the agency to address pressing safety and health problems that put workers in danger.

In addition, the bill includes an increase of $8.5 billion for the Department of Health and Human Services and a $4.4 billion increase for the Department of Education. We also welcome the $67 million increase in funding for the National Labor Relations Board. We commend the Committee for providing an advance appropriation of $495 million for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). This increase in funding recognizes that the CPB, along with the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, bolsters the economy and ensures that all Americans have access to artistic and education content.

Labor HHS Appropriations is the largest non-defense appropriations bill, and it is fitting that the Committee decided to choose this as the first FY 2020 appropriations bill considered by the Committee. We ask that you vote against any "poison pill" amendments that go against the work of the Subcommittee and instead vote for the bill as written.

Sincerely,

William Samuel
Director, Government Affairs