

# FIRST Advocacy Update



*Our Future:*  
**Built Better Together**



# Building Advocacy In the States



Our Future:  
**Built Better Together**

# Building Capacity In the States



Much of previous *FIRST* advocacy has been driven from New Hampshire



Focus of the last few years has been to expand capacity of statewide *FIRST* organizations



Statewide approach to build the necessary tools for them to understand why advocacy matters, how to reach their legislators, and what to focus on



Flexibility based on state organizational experience in advocacy and statewide goals

# Chief State Advocate Program

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Program is developing a broader network of *FIRST* “Advocates” who will be “responsible” for local advocacy efforts and communication of such activities to *FIRST* Headquarters and other key stakeholders.



We have worked to develop an Advocacy Toolkit and it is nearing completion—will provided one stop shop for advocacy efforts across states



Creating perfect storm on advocacy to include teams, HQ involvement & Dean, and leveraging *FIRST* Strategic Sponsors for additional impact

## Early Goals for Statewide Programming

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Replicating state investment that exists in New Hampshire and Michigan

### 2023-2024 Successes

- North Carolina funding, pilot program
- Massachusetts legislation reintroduction
- Iowa- legislation passed Senate, work next year to pass House



# Looking Ahead to Additional Opportunities



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# CHIPS & Science Act

## CHIPS Act of 2022

- This part of legislation is focused on semiconductor companies bringing development and production back to the United States.
- Opportunity for *FIRST* and affiliated entities to serve as workforce delivery partner in application of program funding
- Department of Commerce has been slow to announce recipients of initial rounds of funding, with Intel and BAE being first awardees

## Research & Innovation “Science”

- \$13 billion for National Science Foundation, NASA, and others
- Programs relevant to *FIRST* and more direct funding to programs
- Building *FIRST* internal infrastructure, operations, and relationships needed to capitalize on these programs
- Limited funding continues to be made available by Congress
- NSF is slow to assess how to implement these new opportunities



# CHIPS & Science Act- Ongoing Efforts

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## CHIPS Act of 2022

- Working to demonstrate impact of *FIRST* to Semiconductor Industry Association members
- *FIRST* partner Wolfspeed recently included *FIRST* in application Commerce, continuing to work to schedule meetings with company representatives to discuss role of *FIRST*
- Providing flexibility in how companies could invest in *FIRST* (HQ investment, state investment, mentors, and regional local investment)

## Research & Innovation “Science”

- Ongoing advocacy to ensure Congress funds NSF programs in a tight fiscal environment
- Successfully included language providing \$70 million for our priority program with a focus on extracurricular and hands-on programs
- Continuing to have conversations with NSF to implement programs as designed by Congress
- Working with state *FIRST* organizations on best path for them to apply for funding



# Federal Advocacy Efforts in 2024

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- **Earmarks:** Washington State *FIRST* received \$511,000 in unrestricted funding from Congress last month. Expanding effort in FY 2025, with additional program partners, including New York City, Hawaii, North Carolina, Arizona, and New England
- **DoDSTEM:** Initial conversation on legislation to increase funding through the National Defense Authorization Act and DoDSTEM
- **Perkins:** Ongoing focus on how *FIRST* teams/local entities use Perkins funding (workforce development) and Department of Education policy could be changed to be more beneficial to teams
- **Federal STEM:** Participation in federal “YOU Belong in STEM” initiative and National STEM Festival
- **State:** Survey and assessment of state advocacy efforts

# Elementary and Secondary Education Act

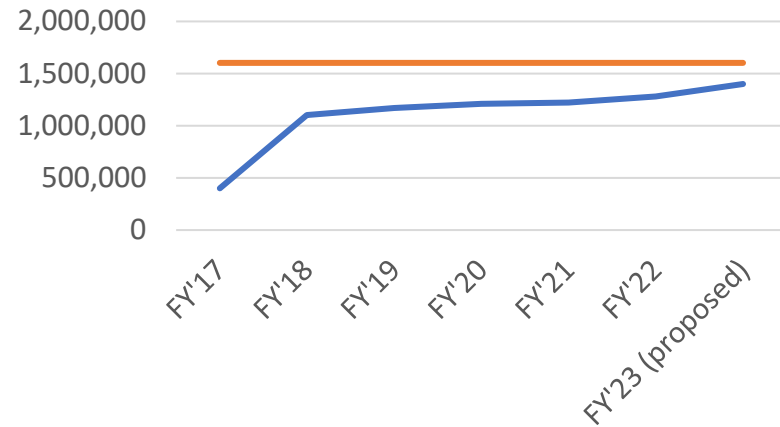
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- Authorizing legislation that governs K-12 Education
  - No Child Left Behind (2003)
  - Every Student Succeeds Act (2015)
- Every Student Succeeds Act includes language allowing states to use large block grant program for “afterschool robotics competitions”
- Congress is hung up on reauthorizing higher education law, but could turn to K-12 in the coming years, how could *FIRST* be better situated

# Appropriations of Relevant Programs

- Every authorized program must have appropriations each year
- Work to ensure that our programs are appropriated at the highest level possible
- Includes Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (Title IV, Part A) and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers
- Congressionally Directed Spending
- Partnership with STEM ED Coalition on shared priorities

Title IV Part A Funding  
(in thousands)



## Relationship Building in Congress/Executive Branch

- Strong working relationship with last administration and Department of Ed
- Working to build those relationships with the new Administration
- Working to make *FIRST* a thought leader in Washington and leader in STEM education
- Help connect PDPs with state elected officials



# Happy to Answer Questions!