[Month, Day, Year]

The Honorable Linda McMahon

Secretary of Education

Department of Education

Dear Madame Secretary,

On behalf of the Student Association for STEM Advocacy, thank you for your leadership and attentive approach towards shaping our nation’s education system. However, we are writing to express our concern regarding the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) decision to hold back funds appropriated by Congress for fiscal year 2025 (FY25) under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Title IV-A, ESSA Title IV-B, and other investments in education. By preventing the expenditure of these appropriated funds, the United States will fall behind in many critical fields that drive the modern economy and enable us to understand the world around us.

ESSA Title IV pertains to 21st Century Schools and it authorizes a range of activities including a block grant program and a program to support learning opportunities at community learning centers, among others. Of particular interest to us is ESSA Title IV-A or the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (SSAE). SSAE grants are used to provide students with access to well-rounded educational opportunities including STEM opportunities. By holding back the $1.38 billion appropriated by Congress in FY25 for Title IV-A, the United States will limit the already minimal access to STEM fields that many young people have. Ultimately, this will hurt the United States in the long run because we will lack the STEM workers needed to further compete in a more modernized global landscape.

To add on, we also have concerns regarding the limited expenditure of appropriated FY25 funds under ESSA Title IV-B. Title IV-B pertains to 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC). Since 94% of 21st CCLC offer STEM learning opportunities, the lack of expending appropriated funds is resulting in over 1.3 million youth losing access to afterschool programs that provide hands-on STEM learning. Currently, the United States is not fully tapping into the pool of available STEM talent. 75% of Generation Z are interested in at least one STEM field, but only 29% hope to pursue a STEM-related occupation in the future. Thus, by holding back the $1.33 billion appropriated by Congress in FY25 to Title IV-B, the United States will be further limiting young Americans from pursuing STEM-related occupations and will weaken America’s ability to grow talent domestically to ensure our competitiveness in the worldwide economy.

Additionally, the Department of Education has withheld other key grant programs that will further hurt America’s education system. These include $376 million for Title I-C migrant education state grants, $890 million for Title III-A English language acquisition grants, $2.190 billion for Title II-A supporting effective instruction state grants, and $715 million for adult education state grants. Combining these held back funds with the withheld $1.38 billion and $1.33 billion under Title IV-A and Title IV-B, we are seeing a total of nearly $7 billion worth of education funding that has been unlawfully withheld.

We are asking you to promptly begin the disbursement of appropriated FY25 funds regarding these investments in education. Since these funds were appropriated by Congress, schools have been counting on their disbursement and adopted budgets for the upcoming fiscal year incorporating said funds. Therefore, the decision by the OMB presents an unfair surprise and gives schools a minimal chance to react to these changes. This has created volatility in education funding, which is not the way to focus on student growth and achievement.

Once again, we ask that you quickly distribute the funds as appropriated by Congress for FY25. Thank you for the opportunity to share our views, and we look forward to working with you and your staff closely to ensure that the United States remains a competitor in the global STEM market.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

Student Association for STEM Advocacy Member

[Robotics Team Name, Program and Number]

[School Name]

[School Address]