CHAMPIONS FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE
COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA

June 6, 2019

Dear Members of Congress:

We write as members of Champions for America's Future, the national, bipartisan organization of elite athletes and coaches working to ensure that every child has the best chance to compete in life. We strongly support programs and policies shown to help children and youth reach their potential and succeed in the 21st century.

As you work on the FY20 Appropriations bills, we urge you to prioritize funding the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant (Title IV A) program at its $1.65 billion authorized level.

Title IV-A funding is critical to helping prepare young people for success. These funds enable communities to support a safe and nurturing school environment through mental health services, drug and violence prevention, promoting STEM education, physical education, health and nutrition education, and blended and personalized learning - all in accordance with the needs of the local schools. This flexibility empowers schools and localities to make the best decisions for their unique student populations.

As coaches and athletes, we know that physical activity and physical education (PE) are critical building blocks to lifelong healthy habits and academic success. Unfortunately, data shows more than half of high school students in the US do not have any PE in an average week, and physical activity drops by an astounding 75 percent between age 9 and 15. Childhood obesity has tripled in the past three decades, and overweight and obese adolescents are far more likely to grow up to be overweight or obese adults. Physical activity has a demonstrated, positive, impact on reducing obesity. A study published in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine in 2008 shows that adolescents who participated all five weekdays in PE decreased their odds of becoming an overweight adult by 28 percent.

Quality physical education also helps kids compete in the classroom. Research shows physical education can impact kids' performance in school. Specifically, physical activity increases neural activity in areas of the brain associated with attention and memory. Because of this relationship, a randomized control trial from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign found that incorporating just 20 minutes of physical activity into the school day significantly improved test scores in math, reading and spelling.

Increased access to physical education is just one use for these funds. Providing resources for well-rounded students is a common sense way to make sure all our children are becoming more active and equipped with lifelong skills. **We urge you to support $1.65 billion for the ESSA Title IV-A, Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant program**.

We have a long way to go to get our children healthier and more active, but continuing this funding so that local school districts can continue implementing game plans for well-rounded Americans into action. Investing now will help ensure that students have the opportunity to succeed in school, achieve their full potential, and contribute to the prosperity of our nation – perhaps even as future Olympians and Paralympians.

Sincerely,

Sasha Cohen
Olympic Silver Medalist, Figure Skating
New York

Ann Meyers Drysdale
Olympic Silver Medalist, Basketball
California

Gigi Fernandez
Olympic Gold Medalist, Tennis
Connecticut

Dick Fosbury
Olympic Gold Medalist, High Jump
Idaho

Vonetta Flowers
Olympic Gold Medalist, Bobsleigh
Florida

Lex Gillette
Paralympic Silver Medalist, Long Jump
California

Jane Geddes
Professional Golfer
Connecticut

Nancy Hogshead-Makar
Olympic Gold Medalist, Swimming
Florida

Angela Hucles
Olympic Gold Medalist, Soccer
California

Jack Hughes
Olympic Hockey & NHL Player
Massachusetts

Nancy Lopez
Professional Golfer
Florida

Liz Masakayan
Olympic Volleyball
California

Steve Mesler
Olympic Gold Medalist, Bobsleigh
New York

Shannon Miller
Olympic Gold Medalist, Gymnastics
Florida

Sharon Monplaisir
Olympic Fencer
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Alana Nichols
Paralympic Gold Medalist, Skiing & Wheelchair Basketball
Colorado

Stacey Nuveman
Olympic Gold Medalist, Softball
California

Shelley Olds
Olympic Cyclist
California

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Johnny "The Jet" Rodgers
Heisman Trophy Winner & NFL Player
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Angela Ruggiero
Olympic Gold Medalist, Hockey
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JoJo Starbuck
Olympic Figure Skater
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Jenny Thompson
Olympic Gold Medalist, Swimming
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Brenda Villa
Olympic Gold Medalist, Water Polo
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Chanda Rubin
Olympic Tennis Player
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Carrie Sheinberg
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Melissa Stockwell
Paralympic Bronze Medalist, Swimming
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