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November 15, 2023

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the more than 3 million members of the National Education Association, who teach and support students in communities across America—including the 20% of students in rural communities—we urge you to vote YES on the bipartisan Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization Act of 2023 (S. 2581). Votes on this issue may be included in the NEA Report Card for the 118th Congress.

S. 2581 would extend through 2026 the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, a law that provides for payments to counties with large expanses of public, tax-exempt forests. The decrease in federal timber sales on these lands beginning in the 1990s led to dramatic reductions in forest county revenues. This prompted significant cuts in education funding and widespread layoffs of teachers and education support professionals, elimination of extracurricular programs, cancellation of school meals programs, and delays in desperately needed school building repairs. The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act offered a solution by:

- Ensuring a predictable payment to federally impacted forest counties where the tax base is lower, impacting vital services to the communities;
- Providing funding for educational services for students in more than 700 rural counties;
- Preventing the closure of remote rural schools serving small communities and the layoffs of school staff and other public-service workers; and
- Protecting funding for libraries, roads, public safety, and other critical infrastructure and services.

Extending the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act is essential to providing students in rural counties with what *all* students, regardless of where they live, should have: a well-rounded and robust education that inspires them, sparks their curiosity, and prepares them for the future. Please vote YES on the Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization Act of 2023.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc Egan", is positioned below the "Sincerely," text.

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association