



February 25, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education & Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, HHS, Education & Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education & Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, HHS, Education & Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chair DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole,

We write on behalf of the Friends of IES, a coalition of organizations committed to supporting the essential role of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), to encourage you to provide \$670 million for IES in the FY 2021 Labor, Health & Human Services, Education, & Related Agencies appropriations bill. This amount would restore the nearly ten percent loss in purchasing power in real dollars that IES has experienced since FY 2011.

IES is a semi-independent, nonpartisan branch of the U.S. Department of Education and plays a critical role in developing the research base for and examining the effectiveness of education programs and curricula. Its four centers – the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Center for Education Research (NCER), National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) and National Center for Education Evaluation (NCEE) – work collaboratively to efficiently and comprehensively deliver rigorous research and high-quality data, statistics, and evaluations.

We greatly appreciated the increased funding for IES in the final FY 2020 appropriations legislation, which will allow IES to support additional research grants to build evidence-based practice. This increase is a step forward to address the needs that require sustained investment in this agency. As IES currently funds only one of every ten grant proposals, this additional funding is critical to ensure knowledge-generating research that will improve our schools and the achievement of our students can be better supported. As one example of the need for more ongoing research, school districts are implementing school improvement plans for their lowest performing schools under the new framework provided under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The investment in IES for evidence-based resources and strategies helps school districts make smart decisions about what plan elements will positively impact student and school performance. Likewise, cost-effectiveness studies and focusing on long-term outcomes under the Standards for Excellence for Education Research (SEER) will likely require additional money for individual grants – potentially reducing the number of research awards.

IES has prioritized making its funded research findings and data more accessible to teachers and school leaders. Yet, insufficient funding for Research, Development, and Dissemination (RD&D) has constrained the ability to award grants in emerging lines of inquiry and tackle pressing questions about education, such as how to build effective leadership to support student learning, bolster the impact of technology in the classroom, address challenges facing rural districts, and improve literacy for adult learners. Additional investment in RD&D could also support additional research and communication of findings on areas of interest to teachers, including research-based reading instruction, effective technology use, and student engagement, including practice guides from the What Works Clearinghouse that synthesize research findings and provide recommendations supported by evidence and examples.

NCES, as one of the 13 federal principal statistical agencies, provides objective data, statistics, and reports on the condition of education in the United States. NCES also provides critical investment in State Longitudinal Data Systems, which have helped states link K-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems to gain a better understanding of education and workforce outcomes and serve as the basis of tools such as early warning systems that identify students at risk of dropping out of school. Sufficient funding for NCES would allow for more timely collection and dissemination of data on key indicators, including teacher salaries, the amount of loans taken out by undergraduate students, and the participation of students in English language learner programs.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) provides essential educational indicators on the progress of the nation's students and schools. Additional investment in NAEP is necessary to address increases in costs for developing and administering assessments to gauge long-term achievement trends not only in math and reading, but also in arts, economics, and geography, subjects where scheduled future assessments were canceled last year.

NCSEER is the only federal agency specifically designated to develop and provide evaluations for programs for students with disabilities, but currently has a budget that has remained relatively flat since FY 2014. Research funded by NCSEER has resulted in programs that support youth with high functioning autism experiencing high levels of anxiety, individuals with Down syndrome learning to read, and students with learning disabilities studying to master math word problems. NCSEER also provides special educators and administrators research-based resources that support the provision of a free appropriate public education and interventions to foster self-determination in students with disabilities as they transition into adulthood. Additional investment in NCSEER could support research that can contribute to identifying strategies that promote family engagement for students with disabilities, understanding the qualities of teacher preparation and professional development that improve academic outcomes for children with or at risk of disabilities, and evaluating the impact of career and technical education programs and policies on students with disabilities.

The Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) conduct applied research that is directly relevant to state and district administrators, principals and teachers. RELs also ensure that research is shared widely through its deep dissemination networks. Recent work across the REL network has focused on ways to address the teacher shortage; how to increase family involvement in developing foundational reading skills; and the relationship between teacher qualifications and student performance in Algebra I. This work is all driven by the state education agencies and other stakeholders in the regions. With additional resources the RELs could produce additional research-based materials to improve teaching and learning with consideration given to regional context.

We also appreciated the inclusion of language in the final FY 2020 appropriations legislation calling for the Department of Education to address how it will ensure adequate staffing levels in the FY 2021 Congressional Justification. In recent years, many IES staff have departed, leading to overall challenges in the execution of key research and evaluation activities. While the justification proposes an increase in staff overall for the Department of Education, we look forward to your continued oversight on this issue to ensure IES has the necessary staff to effectively carry out its mission.

Thank you for your attention to our request to appropriate \$670 million for IES. Improving educational outcomes require sustained investment in the research, data, and evaluation that drive the necessary tools and resources to support the success of our nation's students, teachers, and education leaders.

Sincerely,

American Educational Research Association
American Psychological Association
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
Association of American Universities
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU)
Autism Society of America
Autism Speaks
Boston University
Carnegie Mellon University
Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA)
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
EDGE
Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences
Florida State University
Institute for Higher Education Policy
Johns Hopkins University Center for Research and Reform in Education

Knowledge Alliance
LEARN Coalition
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Lehigh University
Michigan State University
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National Council on Teacher Quality
Population Association of America
Society for Research in Child Development
Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness
Success for All Foundation
Teachers College, Columbia University
Texas A&M University
University of California System
University of Florida
University of Kansas
University of Oregon
University of Virginia
University of Washington College of Education
Vanderbilt University
Virginia Commonwealth University