



March 23, 2021

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

The Honorable Roy Blunt
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 Chairs Murray and DeLauro and Ranking Members Blunt and Cole,

We write on behalf of the Friends of IES, a coalition of 42 organizations committed to supporting the essential role of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). We thank you for increasing funding for IES in FY 2021. To build upon last year's increase and to support IES's mission, **we encourage you to provide at least \$700 million for IES in the FY 2022 Labor, Health & Human Services, Education, & Related Agencies appropriations bill.** This funding level would bolster the research and statistical infrastructure needed to develop and scale up evidence-based interventions to support learning recovery, understand and address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic across all levels of education, and ensure the continuation of research and data collection in the field.

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.

The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified and exacerbated persistent inequities in educational access and gaps in educational outcomes. The inclusion of \$100 million for IES in the American Rescue Plan Act and \$28 million for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act will help enable IES to leverage education research to address the impacts that COVID-19 has had on educational outcomes and socioemotional development.

Alongside this important emergency funding for research, statistics, and evidence-based resources to inform learning recovery as schools safely reopen, IES requires increased

investment to address educational needs beyond the pandemic. While we are deeply grateful for the increased funding for IES over the past few fiscal years, IES remains constrained in its flexibility to fully fund emerging research areas and scale up promising interventions and resources. Appropriating at least \$700 million for IES will allow the agency to make up for a decade of lost purchasing power due to constrained spending as a result of the budget caps, while supporting the education research and statistical infrastructure that are essential to education policy and practice.

COVID-19 has had impacts on ongoing research and data collection. The closure of schools and shift to remote instruction at all levels of education were needed to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19, but had the effect of essentially halting research in the field. Although NCER- and NCSEER-funded grantees have adjusted their research where possible to remote and hybrid instruction, this pivot has also resulted in unanticipated costs and delays to account for necessary COVID-19 protocols. In addition, in-person methods training institutes that help develop the skills of the next generation of education researchers were canceled. Several longitudinal surveys conducted by NCES have also had reduced response rates and delays as school, district, and state leaders appropriately prioritized the continuation of instruction and school services. IES has an important role in advancing innovative and rigorous research, but there is also a need to restore research and professional development opportunities lost during the pandemic.

IES collects data, measures progress, and tests solutions to help tackle the persistent challenges in education – as well as the emerging issues brought on by the pandemic. But more resources are crucial to this effort.

Prior to and during the pandemic, IES has funded only one of every ten grant proposals. Additional funding is critical to ensure knowledge-generating research that will improve our schools and better support the achievement of our students. 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. Additional investment in RD&D could support new high-risk, high-reward research with the potential for transforming education, along with funding research in foundational and emerging areas in education and supporting the synthesis of research findings for use by all education stakeholders.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 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. Due to limited funding and staff resources, NCES is constrained in its capacity to meet the real-time data needs of researchers and policymakers. More than 50 K-12 education and research organizations support additional funding and staff for NCES to be able to conduct a School Pulse Survey to understand how schools are responding to the pandemic, as well as how schools are implementing programs to

address the educational and socioemotional needs of students once schools safely reopen. Additional funding for NCES can provide the capacity to develop and administer surveys, analyze data on timely education issues, and link administrative education data to health and employment data for evidence-based policymaking and to understand the broader context of outcomes.

The Nation's Report Card, NAEP, provides essential educational indicators on the progress of the nation's students and schools. While the NAEP 4th and 8th grade math and reading assessments are postponed a year, resources allocated to NAEP contribute to planning for assessment cycles and surveying participating schools, teachers, and students. NCES is currently using the school background questionnaires as the mechanism for the 2021 NAEP School Survey. We are thankful for the additional funding provided in the FY 2021 final appropriations legislation for NAEP, but there is a continued need for resources to keep up with inflation for assessment costs and to account for pandemic-related delays to the Long Term Trend 17-year-old assessment and 8th grade assessments in U.S. history and civics.

The National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) 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 NCSER has resulted in programs such as those 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. NCSER 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. COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on students with or at-risk of disabilities who have faced significant barriers to educational access over the past year. With additional funding, NCSER could support data and evidence-based resources to guide teachers, administrators, and policymakers in state and local agencies on continued COVID-19 response and recovery.

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. During the pandemic, the RELs have provided a wide range of evidence-based resources to guide teachers, school leaders, and state and local officials on COVID-19 response. This work included a toolkit and professional development to help public school districts better understand how their students are faring due to school closures, guidance to state officials for reopening schools, and webinars on adapting instruction for English learners during the pandemic. This work is all driven by the state education agencies and other stakeholders in the regions. Additional funding is needed to research and support growing local and regional needs to respond to the impact of the pandemic on academic, social and emotional learning.

We have also appreciated the inclusion of language in recent appropriations bills calling for the Department of Education to address how it will ensure adequate staffing levels, including in

IES. Over the past decade, staff levels at IES have decreased by 15 percent, leading to overall challenges in the execution of key research, statistical, and evaluation activities. We look forward to your continued oversight on this issue to ensure IES has the necessary staff to effectively carry out its mission.

We urge Congress to appropriate at least \$700 million for IES. As our country emerges from a year of the greatest national disruption our schools have ever seen, it is critically important that our teachers, school leaders, students, and families have the information they need to know about the impact COVID-19 has had on students' learning and a roadmap to reverse the inevitable learning loss the pandemic has caused. Researchers must also seize on this disruption to take stock of remote and hybrid learning to identify what works and where improvement is needed.

The federal investment in biomedical research over the years has led to discoveries that have resulted in vaccines, treatments, and other measures that have been part of the public health response to COVID-19. A similar, sustained investment in the education research and statistical infrastructure at IES is necessary to inform the development of tools and resources to support the success of our nation's students, teachers, and education leaders, during the pandemic and beyond.

Sincerely,

American Educational Research Association
American Psychological Association
American Statistical Association
Association of American Universities
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Boston University
Carnegie Mellon University
Center for School Health Innovation & Quality
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
EDGE Consulting Partners
ETS
Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences (FABBS)
Florida State University
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
Johns Hopkins University
Knowledge Alliance
LEARN Coalition
Lehigh University
National Association of School Psychologists

National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council on Teacher Quality
New York University
Penn State University
Population Association of America
Results for America
Society for Research in Child Development
Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness
Stony Brook University
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