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April 27, 2022

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 Chair Murray, Ranking Member Blunt, Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

Knowledge Alliance (KA), a non-partisan, non-profit organization, is comprised of leading education organizations committed since 1971 to the greater use of high-quality and relevant data, research, evaluation and innovation in education policy and practice at all levels. Collectively, we have spent the last 50 years supporting a set of education programs focused on building and disseminating evidence to improve teaching and learning in our nation's classrooms.

Knowledge Alliance believes that programs at the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) – such as the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) and the Research, Development, and Dissemination (RD&D) program – coupled with the Comprehensive Centers (CCs) and the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) program at the U.S. Department of Education (ED) are the foundation of the nation's research, dissemination and technical assistance infrastructure. We deeply appreciate the increases in funding provided in Fiscal Year (FY) 22 for these critical programs to better tie evidence to practice in our schools and improve outcomes for students. Moreover, we know these funds will be critical in supporting schools as districts utilize evidence-based practices in their responses to COVID-19 learning loss and the other additional educational challenges posed by this transitional year, especially for student populations who have been historically underserved and were significantly impacted by the pandemic. We encourage Congress to continue to provide increases in each of these programs for FY23 to continue leveraging critical research, technical assistance, evaluation and innovation to help states, districts and schools.

KA priority programs require additional federal resources to address the continuously growing state and local needs for education research and technical assistance, as these programs provide critical support for states, districts and schools. In response to challenges from COVID-19, REL West and Comprehensive Center Regions 2, 13 and 15 provided 8 workshops to approximately 570 state, regional, district and school staff on selecting and measuring evidence-based strategies using American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds. The primary focus of each event was to help state educational agencies (SEAs) develop strategies to support local educational agencies (LEAs) in using their ARP funds to address high-priority needs and select evidenced-based strategies. More recently, the National Comprehensive Center established three

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Communities of Practice (COP) to support SEAs and their partners in three areas: (1) Using ARP funds to implement evidence-based strategies; (2) Implementing school improvement strategies through an equity lens; and (3) Planning for summer/extended learning drawing from evidence-based practices where they exist. With recognition that states and districts can, and should, work together to solve common challenges, the National Comprehensive Center provides a unique space for SEAs and LEAs to learn from each other as they engage around specific problems of practice. In the COP around school improvement, SEA and LEA leaders have already reported how bringing together school leaders, teachers and districts in their community, through an equity lens, is inspiring new, innovative, approaches to help low-performing schools. Clearly, both RELs and CCs have been first in line to provide technical assistance and evidence-based resources to interested SEAs and LEAs. An increase in funding would allow these programs to expand their work and better meet the ever-growing need for support.

Despite the evident need for education research, dissemination and technical assistance infrastructure, evidence shows that this work remains underfunded. Three recently released [reports](#) by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) noted that IES is currently overburdened and underfunded, preventing efficient grant review cycles, adequate staffing levels and innovation within the agency. In the NASEM report titled “The Future of Education Research at IES,” there was consensus that “Congress should re-examine the IES budget, which does not appear to be on par with that of other scientific funding agencies.” The report notes that education research programs at the National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Institutes of Health (NIH) receive substantially more funds than IES despite working with similar constituents on comparable issues. Moreover, as the hub of all federal education research work, IES is best situated to effectively create and disseminate evidence-based resources to the field. It is evident that KA’s priority programs require increases in FY23 to better meet the needs of states, districts, and schools nationwide.

To support continued education research, evaluation and innovation outlined above, we urge you to provide increases over FY22 levels in FY23 for existing federal research and development infrastructure. KA proposes a critical investment of:

- \$815.0 million for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES)
- \$267.9 million for the Research Development and Dissemination (RD&D) program at IES
- \$65.0 million for the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) Program
- \$60.0 million for the Comprehensive Centers (CCs)
- \$514.0 million for the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) program

This request translates to approximately a 10 percent increase for IES, RELs and CCs. We have requested an approximately 30 percent increase for RD&D to account for how, as the hub of general education research, it will be relied heavily upon to support research post-COVID. Finally, KA’s EIR request matches the President’s FY23 budget, which recognizes the importance of education research innovation and proposes a significant investment in addressing the educator shortage, an issue KA members are actively working on.

Attached below is an addendum which provides greater detail on the request for each of the programs outlined above. Thank you for your consideration of these important recommendations. We believe that continued strong support for, and investment in, the education research and development infrastructure will help improve outcomes for students and effectively leverage scarce federal resources. Furthermore, it

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will empower states and local school districts to develop and implement the innovative, evidence-based approaches that work best for the students in their communities.

Please let me know if Knowledge Alliance can be of any further assistance during the appropriations process.

Sincerely,



Rachel Dinkes
President

FY23 Appropriations Addendum

The Institute of Education Sciences. IES is a major source of federal funding for education research. Through its four research centers— the National Center for Education Research (NCER), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE) and the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) —IES funds hundreds of grants and contracts annually that support a wide range of research projects. These centers support projects that provide vital information, often with an equity focus, on students with disabilities, teacher preparation and strategies for improving college and workforce readiness, among other topics. In the past year, IES has successfully pivoted its efforts to consider projects in the larger context of the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery.

NCEE serves two critically important functions. First, it conducts independent evaluations of education programs supported with federal funds. Second, NCEE houses resources for SEAs and LEAs including the RELs, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) and the National Library of Education.

For example:

The What Works Clearinghouse produces reviews of research on education curriculum and practice guides with evidence-based recommendations to support teaching and learning. According to the Jefferson Education Exchange, nearly a third of educators surveyed used resources from the What Works Clearinghouse. In direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the What Works Clearinghouse released a [Rapid Evidence Review of Distance Learning Programs](#) that identifies and reports on what works in distance learning educational programming from Kindergarten onwards. Additionally, the WWC provides educational webinars to better disseminate research in the field, most recently they held a webinar on providing reading interventions for students in grades 4-9.

Additional basic research could be done in areas of importance to educators and policymakers if more funding were available, particularly in the areas of postsecondary completion and workplace credentials. As basic research moves into the applied realm, the What Works Clearinghouse will continue to serve as a resource for educators looking for effective, research-based interventions.

Regional Educational Laboratories. The ten RELs nationwide, which operate under five-year contracts with ED, conduct applied research, develop and disseminate research-based products and provide training to states and school district staff as well as resources for educators, families and caregivers. Since the RELs have a broad set of regional stakeholders that extend beyond the SEA, they are well-attuned to a wider range of student and teacher needs. In addition to forming research partnerships focused on problems of practice in the field that provide relevant and responsive research and findings that address local needs; RELs utilize the resources of the WWC, such as the practice guides, to break down the evidence into digestible chunks for educator use. They have also developed webinars and other resources based on the practice guides to aide in translating research for educators. RELs are continuously

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developing tools that districts and schools use to improve teaching and learning. In response to the pandemic, RELs have provided [evidence-based resources](#) to help address a host of critical challenges facing states, districts, educators and families as they continue to navigate the impacts of COVID-19.

For example:

Recognizing that some districts face challenges with recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers, education leaders in Michigan partnered with REL Midwest to develop the Midwest Alliance to Improve Teacher Preparation (MAITP). From 2017 to 2021, MAITP conducted research with education leaders, practitioners, policymakers and researchers in Michigan, Illinois and Indiana to address teacher recruitment and retention.

To increase the number of teachers available to Michigan public schools, MAITP members wanted to explore the validity of recruiting nonteaching certified teachers. In 2021, REL Midwest published a study that examined why some certified teachers no longer teach in Michigan public schools. The study found approximately 61,000 teachers certified in Michigan were not teaching in the state's public schools in 2017-18. The study also identified increased salary and simplification of certification requirements as desired incentives for teachers to consider returning to the classroom. REL Midwest created a companion infographic and documentary to communicate the study findings. The Michigan Department of Education drew on the findings and launched the "Welcome Back Proud Michigan Educator Campaign," an initiative that seeks to recruit individuals with expired teacher certificates into the teacher workforce by reducing—and in some cases, eliminating—professional learning requirements for recertification.

Education Innovation and Research. The EIR Program, authorized by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), helps drive substantial and lasting improvements in student achievement by supporting the development and scale-up of successful innovations at the state and local levels. EIR uses a tiered evidence approach that has two important design principles: it provides more funds to programs with higher levels of evidence, and it requires rigorous and independent evaluations so that programs continue to improve, and future competitions can be geared towards more promising areas of investment.

KA supports the Administration's FY23 EIR proposal which recommends a historic, and needed, increase in funding for the program. EIR would allow for the creation of more innovative evidence-based resources to address the myriad of educational challenges facing the nation. Of this historic increase, \$350 million would target projects that identify and scale up evidence-based strategies to elevate and strengthen a teacher workforce hit hard by COVID-19. Given the educator workforce shortage, KA supports the use of these funds to support efforts to stabilize the profession through improved support for educators and expanded professional growth opportunities, including access to leadership opportunities that can lead to increased pay and improved retention for fully certified, experienced, and effective teachers.

EIR grantees are also focusing on improving areas of teaching and learning, such as literacy. Much attention has recently been drawn to this area, with NAEP scores falling for those at the bottom of the distribution it is clear that America's lowest performing students are struggling, and journalists have

highlighted that teachers are still not being prepared to teach literacy based on the science of reading. EIR projects, such as the one described below, can help make a difference in this regard.

For example:

Future Forward is a literacy intervention for students struggling with reading from kindergarten through third grade that combines intensive one-on-one tutoring during the school day with family engagement support embedded in all aspects of the program. Ongoing support from the U.S. Department of Education through the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) grant program has allowed Future Forward to rigorously evaluate their program with randomized controlled trials and multi-site regression discontinuity analysis. The external evaluation found the program yielded positive, statistically significant impacts on reading achievement, literacy, and regular school attendance. The EIR program has enabled Future Forward to subsequently sustain, replicate and scale those practices.

In December of 2021, Future Forward was awarded an expansion-phase EIR grant and will work over the next five years to expand to several dozen new schools in rural communities across the country; prepare schools to take full ownership over long-term program implementation to ensure sustainability; and rebuild the online program management platform to become a first of its kind integrated reporting system for supplemental education programs. Future Forward was the recipient of a mid-phase EIR grant in 2017 (the program was known as “SPARK”) as well as an Investing in Education (i3) grant in 2010.

Comprehensive Centers. The Comprehensive Centers (CCs) provide technical assistance that builds the capacity of SEAs to help districts and schools improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps and increase the quality of instruction. The CCs were recompeted in 2020 and now include 19 Regional Centers that work closely with states in their regions on implementation of critical reforms in elementary and secondary education, as well as one national center providing technical assistance to the regional centers and SEAs. The CCs operate under a Memorandum of Understanding with each SEA in the region, and the SEA sets the scope of work to be conducted through the five-year agreement.

For example:

In 2021, the National Comprehensive Center and national partners launched the Summer Learning & Enrichment Collaborative (“the Collaborative”) to support states, school districts and community partners in using ARP funds to implement and expand evidence-based summer learning and enrichment experiences for students, especially those most impacted by the pandemic. Throughout the summer of 2021, the Collaborative invited states, school districts, community partners, and other stakeholders to participate in a series of eight virtual learning opportunities to discuss and share promising practices in planning and implementing summer experiences for all students and student groups.

The Collaborative hosted over 50 topical sessions for over 1,300 participants across 49 states. Sessions addressed a wide range of topics from staff recruitment to student attendance, STEM partnerships, developing community-school agreements and many more.