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October 31, 2022

Shalanda Young
Director, The Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington D.C. 20503

Dear Ms. Young,

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.

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) programs at the U.S. Department of Education (ED) are the foundation of the nation's education research, dissemination and technical assistance infrastructure. KA deeply appreciates 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. We hope Congress chooses to build on these important investments in FY23. 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 educational challenges, especially for student populations who have been historically underserved and were significantly impacted by the pandemic. **To support continued education research, evaluation, and innovation outlined above, we urge the Administration, in its FY24 budget, to provide at least a 10 percent increase over final FY23 levels for core and innovative programs at IES, particularly the REL and RD&D programs, and the CC program at ED. In addition, KA was appreciative of the President's FY23 request of $514M for the EIR program and urges the Administration to match or raise this level of support for this important program in FY24.**

As Secretary Cardona noted in his Dear Colleague letter to States on September 13, 2022, "RELs and CCs are excellent forums for engaging with other state leaders and measurement experts around data, communication, visualization, and interpretation." Secretary Cardona also stressed that leveraging RELs and CCs to provide clear, timely and concise information will help educators, parents and families chart progress towards academic recovery. KA's priority programs require additional Federal resources to continue to deliver on their missions and purposes. Despite the clear need for education research, dissemination and technical assistance infrastructure, **three 2022 reports by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) found that IES is 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 education field. It is evident that KA's priority programs require increases in FY24 to better meet the needs of States, districts and schools nationwide as called for by Secretary Cardona and NASEM.

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 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

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Knowledge Alliance has released a number of reports and blogs this year showcasing the critical work funded by KA priority programs:

[Issue Brief on the Educator Shortage](#)
Examples of activities addressing the educator shortage carried out by federally funded KA member organizations with a focus on the work done by RELs and CCs.

[How CTAC is Helping the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Create a Sustainable Educator Pipeline](#)
Examples of work carried out by the Region 12CC serving Colorado, Kansas and Missouri.

[How AIR is Helping State Boards of Education Increase the Recruitment and Retainment of Educators of Color](#)
Examples of work carried out by the Region 8 and 9 CCs serving Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois and Iowa.

[How Education Northwest Helped Change Washington State Law to Eliminate Barriers to Certification for "Limited Certified Teachers"](#)
Examples of work carried out by REL Northwest serving Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington.

[How REL Appalachia at SRI is Working to Include Educators in Mental Health and Trauma Support for Schools](#)
Examples of work carried out by REL Appalachia serving Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.

[KA President Blog Post: NAEP Results Underscore the Critical Need for Education Research and Technical Assistance](#)
KA's statement on the September 2022 release of National Assessment on Educational Progress (NAEP) data on student math and reading scores. In the statement, we noted that the data bring into sharp focus how important and critical data collections are to learning recovery and how urgently we need to provide timely, evidence-based, resources to support student learning and well-being for all. While NAEP data sheds light on the state of student achievement, IES's other centers and programs are on-the-ground providing evidence-based resources to support State Educational Agencies (SEAs), Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), and most importantly, educators and students.

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FY24 Appropriations Addendum

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES). 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.

Example: The What Works Clearing House (WWC)
The WWC 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 conducted 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 (RELs). The ten nationwide RELs, 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 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.

Example: REL Midwest

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 (EIR). 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.

EIR grantees are focused 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.

Example: Future Forward

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 (CCs). 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.

<u>Example: The National Comprehensive Center</u>

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.