September 27, 2023

The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici   The Honorable Brian K. Fitzpatrick
2231 Rayburn House Office Building   271 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC, 20515-3701   Washington, DC, 20515-3801

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representatives Bonamici and Fitzpatrick, and Senator Bennet,

We, the undersigned, write in support of the New Essential Education Discoveries (NEED) Act. The bill will strengthen education R&D to dramatically improve outcomes and experiences for teachers and learners. The future of education will require innovations and evidence-based practices that can only be unlocked by investing in research and development to help prepare all students for a globally competitive world.

The 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores for 9 year-olds revealed the largest drop in reading scores since 1990 and a 7-point decline in math. NAEP scores for 13 year-olds are similarly bleak. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted unprecedented learning loss and exacerbated existing disparities in student achievement. The loss of one-third of a year of learning translates to an economic downturn of $14.2 trillion and threatens national competitiveness. The NEED Act will accelerate efforts to reverse this trend by advancing breakthrough ideas to improve teaching and learning.

The NEED Act will establish a National Center for Advanced Development in Education (NCADE) at the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). Modeled after the success of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the Defense Department's renowned R&D incubator, NCADE will have the hiring flexibility to bring creative and nimble project managers that can lead multidisciplinary teams to conduct informed-risk, high-reward projects. Specifically, NCADE will fund projects to develop cutting-edge practices, breakthrough technologies, and pedagogical approaches based on their potential to transform education.

The NEED Act will also expand and upgrade the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) program. This will help states better track students' progress through K-12 and into the workforce, integrate data across multiple domains, ensure the privacy of students' education records, and generate high-quality data in actionable formats. The modernization of SLDS will ensure that state data systems can be an effective tool to inform translational and use-driven research, resulting in meaningful and measurable benefits in school districts and postsecondary institutions.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue. We look forward to working with you to prioritize this legislation to become law.

Sincerely,