



March ##, 2024 **VERSION CIRCULATING FOR ORG SIGNERS**

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

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

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

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

Dear Chairs Aderholt and Baldwin and Ranking Members DeLauro and Capito,

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). **We urge you to provide at least \$900 million for IES in the FY 2025** Labor, Health & Human Services, Education, & Related Agencies appropriations bill. This amount would enable IES to build on ongoing research and development activities to improve educational outcomes, bolster education research and data infrastructure, and develop actionable resources drawing upon IES-funded research.

IES is an independent, nonpartisan branch of the U.S. Department of Education charged with providing information on the condition and progress of education, educational practices that support learning and improve academic achievement and access to educational opportunities for all students, and the effectiveness of federal and other education programs. IES works collaboratively across its programs to meet this mission through producing high-quality research, trustworthy data and statistics, and developing partnerships between researchers and practitioners to inform evidence-based education policy and practice.

The impact of prior IES investment includes the development of programs that have been effective in improving reading and math outcomes and reducing achievement gaps. These interventions have been highlighted through What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guides and are the basis of toolkits being developed by Regional Educational Laboratories. IES funding has also been used to examine the impact of state and local education policies, producing findings that can be applied to other states and districts.

Yet, even with these successes, limited resources have had a direct impact on IES's priorities for addressing persistent and emerging challenges in education through investments in research, statistics, and evidence-based resources. Over the past couple of years, IES has been forced to curtail funding new research proposals, was unable to run competitions in education research

and special education research, and delayed the administration of important statistical surveys. With the important role that education has for developing literacy and math skills, preparing students for civic engagement and participation in the workforce, and fostering innovation, investment across IES programs is essential for producing research and data that can inform evidence-based decision-making in education across the nation.

Within IES, the **Research, Development, and Dissemination (RD&D)** line item supports research and development grants in emerging topic areas and longstanding challenges in education policy and practice. The RD&D line also supports the synthesis and dissemination of evidence-based resources through the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC).

The RD&D line is one of the primary federal funding sources for basic and applied education research grants and training grants that develop the methodological skills of a diverse education research workforce. Due to limited funding, the National Center for Education Research (NCER) awarded only \$14.1 million in new grants for competitions run in FY 2023, a significantly lower amount compared to prior years. Additional funding within RD&D is critical to support research that drives the development of evidence-based education programs, and addresses research needs such as the potential impact on the use of education technology and AI learning processes; which allocation and spending strategies by states, districts, and education leaders are associated with improved education outcomes; and identification of the skills teachers need to provide effective instruction to learners from various backgrounds.

As part of the Accelerate, Transform, and Scale initiative, IES is investing in transformative research and the Seedlings to Scale program to develop innovative, quick turnaround, evidence-based research and tools with the potential for breakthroughs in teaching and learning. Increased funding for RD&D can expand this important work to scale up promising practice and draw on foundational research to drive innovations for improving academic and non-academic outcomes.

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 (SLDS)**, which have helped states link K-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems to gain a better understanding of education and workforce outcomes. States receiving grants in 2023 are working to modernize systems to be more responsive to stakeholder needs, incorporate artificial intelligence tools, and include school finance indicators. Additional funding for SLDS would ensure that states have the full capacity to carry out additional grants for states to enhance data quality, develop data governance structures, and pilot innovative measures.

NCES works with stakeholders to provide relevant data through administrative and longitudinal surveys, but limited funding and staff resources over the past decade has constrained NCES in its capacity to collect and report key education indicators. As one recent example, the planned administration of the next round of the Baccalaureate and Beyond survey has been canceled. This action will limit future understanding of job outcomes for bachelor's degree recipients and their experiences with student loan repayment. Additional funding for the **Statistics** line would expand the agency's capacity to collect and analyze data on timely

education issues, including through the School Pulse Panel survey, and sustain important longitudinal studies that are the basis for informing policy actions.

The Nation's Report Card, NAEP, provides essential educational indicators on the progress of the nation's students and schools. Results from the 2023 Long-Term Trend math and reading assessments for 13-year-olds and the 2022 Civics NAEP showed a continued pattern of declining average scores seen before and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding for NAEP is essential to administer mandatory and voluntary NAEP assessments, update assessment frameworks, and report NAEP results. Additional resources for the Assessment line can support implementing innovations to incorporate adaptive testing, the joint R&D agenda that NCES and the National Assessment Governing Board is undertaking, and the administration of voluntary NAEP assessments such as civics and science to produce state-level results.

The Research in Special Education line supports research and training grants within the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER). 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 remains below its FY 2010 funding level of \$70 million. 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.

NCSER did not run competitions in FY 2022 for its special education research and training grants programs and was unable to award all eligible grants for funding in the FY 2023 special education research grants competition. Even with the success that NCSER-supported work has had to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, there are several important areas where increased investment in NCSER could support with additional funding. These topics include family engagement for older students with disabilities, how state and local policies and practices influence student achievement and post-school success, and how students with disabilities academically perform and make use of accessibility features or accommodations within digital platforms.

The Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) conduct applied research that is driven by the needs identified by state and district administrators, principals, and teachers. RELs also ensure that research is shared widely through deep dissemination networks. Recent work by the RELs has been responsive to pressing issues, including by REL Southwest, in partnership with the Texas Education Agency, to address gaps in grade 6-8 reading achievement that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Middle School (PRISMS) Toolkit will include resources for middle school educators and administrators for implementing the recommendations from the WWC Practice Guide, *Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4-9*. Additional funding is needed to research and support growing local and regional needs to continue to improve academic, social, and emotional outcomes.

We urge Congress to appropriate at least \$900 million for IES in FY 2025, which would sustain and expand the capacity for IES to advance innovative research, develop the methodological skills of education researchers, and continue to support high-quality and trustworthy statistics

and evidence-based resources. The demand for evidence-based strategies to accelerate learning and to support mental health needs of students and educators requires a significant investment in education R&D infrastructure.

Sincerely,