knowledge alliance

May 6, 2025

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

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

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

Dear Chair Capito, Ranking Member Baldwin, Chair Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro,

On behalf of Knowledge Alliance (KA) we urge you to include robust funding for education research, development and dissemination (RD&D) in the U.S. Department of Education (ED) in the fiscal year (FY) 2026 appropriations bill. KA is a non-profit, non-partisan organization composed of the leading education groups dedicated to empowering schools, districts and all 50 States with the tools and resources needed to improve learning and outcomes for every student. KA members partner with States and districts to strengthen their education goals and address their pressing academic issues like literacy and math performance and overall school improvement. KA members' work provides information needed for parents and families to help their students succeed.

This is a critical time for Congress to preserve and strengthen the essential role of education RD&D to support parents, educators, and policymakers in improving student outcomes. Earlier this year, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) at ED released the newest data from the Nation's Report Card. These data showed a mixed picture, with some academic recovery post-COVID in math, but overall continued declines in reading. Despite these sobering results, there were bright spots—specifically in States and districts that implemented research-backed strategies. For example, Mississippi, Tennessee and Louisiana improved their NAEP reading scores in large part through investing in strategies including the science of reading and high-quality learning materials.

While national recovery remains uneven, outcomes were better where schools implemented evidence-based supports. The NAEP data show two urgent needs: States must have more choices of evidence-based interventions to meet their challenges, and they need federal funding to help develop, test, and scale these solutions. No single State or district can shoulder this responsibility alone—**federal investment in education RD&D benefits every school and every student**. Now is the time to invest more, not step back. The evidence is clear: evidence-based interventions work,

and ongoing, high-quality data collection is essential to know where we stand as a nation and how to improve.

Unfortunately, the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) cancelled many critical education RD&D initiatives. Congress must now show its support for the federal role in education research. This is not a partisan issue. Without robust funding for key RD&D programs in FY 2026, parents, communities, districts, and States will lose essential access to the research, data, and evidence that drive effective decision-making and student learning.

A strong education RD&D infrastructure is critical because it meets every community where they are, delivering tailored support whether through faster access to information, scaling of proven practices, professional development, or evaluation of program impact. A robust RD&D system is what ensures that investments translate into real improvements for students. It bridges the gap between promising ideas and actual results in classrooms, helping turn isolated successes into widespread progress.

To support this system, KA asks that you include the following robust levels for these priority programs in a final FY 26 bill. While our request reflects what may appear to be a large percentage increase for FY26, it's important to note that this is in part because FY25 funding has been held at FY24 levels under a continuing resolution—and FY24 itself represented a significant cut from FY23. For example, the IES was funded at $807.7 million in FY23, but dropped to $793 million in FY24 and remained flat in the FY25 CR. We are requesting at least $900 million in FY26 to begin reversing these cuts and to restore critical services and supports for students, parents, educators, district and State policy leaders. This request is not a dramatic increase in real terms—it is a necessary course correction after multiple years of disinvestment in education research, evaluation, and evidence-based improvement.

- **At least $900 million for IES; specifically,**
    - ○ **$258 million for the Research Development and Dissemination (RD&D) program at IES**
    - ○ **$60 million for the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) Program**
- **$58 million for the Comprehensive Centers (CCs)**
- **$298 million for Education Innovation and Research (EIR)**
- **That these programs and funding levels are included in the FY26 bill text to ensure they are funded as intended by Congress.**

Maintaining and strengthening education RD&D through these programs ensures that other Federal investments in education-whether through Title I, IDEA, or competitive grants-directly improve learning and outcomes for students by ensuring that the implementation of these programs is research-grounded and evaluation-informed. While investments in education RD&D represent only a small fraction of the overall Federal education budget, the return on these investments is what maximizes the impact of every other dollar spent, making them indispensable.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. Please let me know if Knowledge Alliance can be of any further assistance during the appropriations process.

Sincerely,

Rachel Dinkes
President and CEO

FY26 Appropriations Addendum

Research, Development, and Dissemination (RD&D) at the Institute of Education Sciences (IES): IES was created in 2002 by the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA) in 2002 and has four centers, each of which fulfill a unique need within the education research landscape. The IES RD&D called out in the appropriations explanatory text funds two of IES' centers: the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE) and the National Center for Education Research (NCER).

NCEE is responsible for building evidence about "what works" at scale in education policy and practice and then mobilizing that knowledge so educators and decisionmakers can use it to benefit learners. NCEE operates:
- o **Federal program evaluation**, which evaluates the implementation of federal programs at the state, local, and institutional levels and the impact of federal policy and policy-relevant intervention strategies
- o The **What Works Clearinghouse** (WWC), which reviews high-quality research on education policies, programs, products and practices to inform decisionmakers
- o The **Education Resources Information Center** (ERIC), which serves as the nation's free, public, online bibliography of education research

NCER is charged with funding rigorous research that contributes to the solution of significant education problems in the United States, and with building a research infrastructure for the education sciences. Through its research investments, NCER generates evidence that is intended to result in high-quality education for all children, improvement in student academic achievement, reduction in the achievement gap between high performing and low-performing students, and increased access to and opportunity for postsecondary education. In 2023, NCER, with support from Congress, began developing a portfolio of risk-informed, high reward, rapid turnaround studies modeled on DARPA and other "ARPA like" agencies throughout the federal government.

Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) are research partners that work directly with State and Local Education Agencies to conduct rigorous, actionable research and evaluation aligned to the priorities identified by the field. They are the only federally funded entities dedicated to providing research,

evaluation, and research-related technical assistance determined by State and district needs. For more than fifty years, RELs have helped States and districts generate evidence and knowledge to improve outcomes in areas such as teacher retention, literacy, math achievement, and career readiness. The most recent REL projects were supporting states on issues including math and literacy improvement, college and career readiness, and career and technical education, among others.

Comprehensive Centers (CCs) focus on capacity-building and implementation support. While RELs help determine what works, CCs help ensure that those strategies can be effectively put into practice and sustained over time. CCs provide high-quality technical assistance, facilitate strategic planning, and offer practical support to help States and districts close achievement gaps and improve instruction. Each CC's scope of work is driven by the priorities of the States it serves and informed by a diverse advisory board including the chief state school officer or designee, plus stakeholder groups such as educators, policymakers, researchers, and business and other community leaders. The most recent CC projects were planning to support states on issues including math and literacy improvement, school improvement, teacher retention, and others.

Education Innovation and Research (EIR) grants fund evidence-based, field-initiated innovations to improve student outcomes. The EIR program consists of three different types of grants (early, mid-phase and expansion grants) that allocate increased investments as the level of evidence increases—an efficient and smart investment of Federal funds. This dedicated funding for ground-up innovation is an essential component of federal education RD&D to maintain. The current EIR projects are working on innovations in the areas of STEM engagement, generative AI, enhancing math teacher effectiveness, and others.