



Senator Joni Ernst
Chairwoman of the Senate Small Business
Committee
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Senator Ed Markey
Ranking Member of the Senate Small
Business Committee
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Chairwoman Ernst and Ranking Member Markey,

On behalf of the [Alliance for Learning Innovation \(ALI\)](#), I want to express our excitement and gratitude over the reports that progress is being made in the negotiations to reauthorize the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program. SBIR is essential to the U.S. innovation enterprise and is a powerful tool for the government to facilitate the commercialization of federally funded research. We urge you to continue negotiations and reauthorize the program as soon as possible so that the innovation pipeline can be reinvigorated in the United States.

As a coalition whose mission is to build a more innovative and evidence-based education system, ALI is very supportive of the SBIR program at the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) within the U.S. Department of Education. While this program is an incredibly small portion of IES' budget, it has an outsized return on investment for the commercialization of education research – from 2013-2023 alone, the [ED SBIR program had a 9:1 rate of return on investment](#). ALI is supportive of the continuation of the SBIR program because it provides tangible spending on investments in education research, clear information on outcomes, and concrete measures of success. This [program](#) is essential for putting novel, evidence-based innovations into the hands of teachers to increase academic achievement across our nation's schools.

Once a comprehensive reauthorization of SBIR has passed, we look forward to engaging with IES on ways to strengthen its innovation programs. For example, we are supportive of the IES Direct to Phase II awards and hope to see them continued. We believe that currently proposed changes to Phase III of the SBIR program will also make it easier to implement new technologies rather than ending at the research stage. The ALI Coalition is also supportive of other education innovation programs, including those facilitated by the [Accelerate, Transform, and Scale \(ATS\) initiative](#). The launch of ATS saw an encouraging number of first-time applicants to IES programs, and SBIR has similar potential to encourage new entrants and grow the field of commercialization-ready education R&D innovators, rather than relying on incumbents. When considering mechanisms to bolster technology transfer and commercialization within the education ecosystem, we believe that IES should take steps to:

- Increase researcher awareness of and capacity to participate in these programs;
- Expand public and industry engagement to help sustain technology transfer efforts;



- Coordinate resources to better position tools for adoption;
- Require funded innovation projects to track and report social and economic outcomes over time to the public; and
- Consider how to make funded evidence-based interventions [stronger through the utilization of artificial intelligence.](#)

Thank you both for your leadership to date towards a compromise reauthorization of the SBIR program. We are hopeful a final deal will be reached soon and are grateful for your work to secure and improve the U.S. innovation ecosystem through support for these important programs. Please do not hesitate to reach out if the ALI Coalition can be a resource related to innovation in the education ecosystem.

Sincerely,

Sara Schapiro
Executive Director, Alliance for Learning Innovation

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