

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we urge you to appropriate \$700 million for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES).

IES is a semi-independent and nonpartisan agency of the U.S. Department of Education and plays a critical role in developing the research base for and evaluating the effectiveness of the nation's education programs. IES helps make sure that taxpayers' money is being invested in efforts that are supported by rigorous research and demonstrated results. Local, state, and federal governments invest billions of dollars on public education each year, and policymakers at all levels depend on IES- supported evidence to inform the best decisions for these dollars.

Congress has demonstrated an increasing appreciation and commitment to the importance of innovation, evidence, and evaluation when determining how to best spend Federal dollars, especially in education. The COVID-19 pandemic has made clear the demand for evidence-based tools and real-time data in the response across education since March 2020. The pandemic's effect on exacerbating persistent gaps in educational access has also emphasized the need to understand and address the effect of lost instructional time on educational outcomes and socioemotional development, particularly for students with disabilities, students of color, and students who have faced financial hardship during the pandemic. Through its centers and programs, IES is providing evidence-based resources and collecting survey data to better gauge how schools, teachers, and students have been affected by COVID-19.

IES has an important role to play in hastening the educational recovery necessary from the COVID-19 pandemic. Its ongoing work is also critical to the use of evidence-based practices, increasing student achievement and enhancing socioemotional development of children. Even with the increases to programs within the IES budget over the past few years, the investment in IES has not caught up to account for lost purchasing power during the past decade. With these funding constraints, the ability of IES to foster new and innovative ideas to drive success in our schools and better instructional practices for our teachers has been severely reduced. This especially harms disadvantaged students by limiting the use of evidence necessary for them to learn and succeed.

IES received an increase in funds in FY2021, but some programs are still operating at funding levels lower than in years past; and although IES research has produced great results, it has been highly constrained by limited investment. For example, for every ten applications that IES receives, including those received by National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER), only one is funded. During the pandemic, grant recipients have experienced unanticipated costs and delays to accommodate remote learning and comply with necessary COVID-19 protocols. Similarly, states seeking grants to improve their own administrative data systems have been turned away. This means many pressing questions that will continue to need to be addressed beyond the pandemic, including questions regarding school safety, serving non-traditional student populations, and creating affordable pathways for good-paying jobs, remain unanswered.

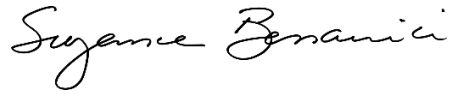
The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has experienced severe funding constraints that affect the quality of its surveys, particularly as the agency faces declining survey response rates that prompt additional analyses to make sure that the data accurately describes target populations. Additional investment in the NCES is needed so students and families can better understand institutional outcomes, such as enrollment, completion, and post-college success across programs and majors. This investment would also bring the added benefit of increasing transparency at our higher education institutions. Congress provided additional funding for the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), but is still below the pace of increased costs for the development and administration of tests, particularly for assessments that have been delayed due to the pandemic.

Hardest hit under IES has been NCSER. Despite operating under a budget that is only two-thirds of what it was in 2005, research funded by NCSER has resulted in programs such as those that support youth with high functioning autism experiencing high levels of anxiety, individuals with Down syndrome learning to read, and students with learning disabilities studying to master math word problems. 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. With additional funding, NCSER could support data and evidence-based resources to guide teachers, administrators, and policymakers in state and local agencies on continued COVID-19 response and recovery.

The Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) conduct applied research that is directly relevant to state and district administrators, principals and teachers. RELs also make sure that research is shared widely through its deep dissemination networks. During the pandemic, the RELs have provided a wide range of evidence-based resources to guide teachers, school leaders, and state and local officials on COVID-19 response. This work included a toolkit and professional development to help public school districts better understand how their students are faring due to school closures, guidance to state officials for reopening schools, and webinars on adapting instruction for English learners during the pandemic. Additional funding is needed to research and support growing local and regional needs to respond to the impact of the pandemic on academic, social and emotional learning.

Thank you for your attention to our request to appropriate \$700 million for IES in FY 2022. Our education system will be stronger in the future if we provide meaningful, sustained support for rigorous education research and evaluation today.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

ADDITIONAL SIGNATORIES

A. Donald McEachin	Jake Auchincloss
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