

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 28, 2019

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
Subcommittee of Labor, HHS, Education and
Related Agencies
U.S. House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee of Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
U.S. House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we urge you to appropriate \$670 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. Although we saw moderate increases to the Research, Development and Dissemination (RD & D) and the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) within the IES budget in FY 2018, overall IES has not recovered from the severe cuts to funding due to sequestration and over the last few fiscal years has largely remained flat.

With largely flat funding, the ability of IES to foster new and innovative ideas to drive academic achievement 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. If Congress wants to use evidence and evaluation to inform decisions and drive results, IES will require steady and purposeful increases over a multi-year period.

Although we appreciated the modest increase provided for IES in FY 2018, some programs are still functioning at funding levels lower than in years past. IES research has produced great results, but it has been highly constrained by limited investment. For example, for every 10 applications that IES receives, including those received by NCSER, only one is funded. Critical research that meets IES' high standards is not being funded to the detriment of educators and students. Similarly, states seeking grants to improve their own administrative data systems have been turned away. This means many pressing questions—including questions regarding school safety, serving non-traditional student populations, and creating affordable pathways for good-paying technical jobs that do not require a four-year degree—are left unanswered.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has experienced severe funding constraints that impact the quality of its surveys, particularly as the agency faces declining survey response rates that

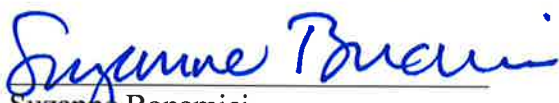
prompt additional analyses to ensure that the data accurately describes target populations. While IES research has several studies on the higher education in the works, there is a lot that students and families still can't know without additional investment in the NCES. Students and families want to better understand institutional outcomes for students, such as enrollment, completion, and post-college success across programs and majors. Additional investment in NCES would bring the added benefit of increasing transparency at our higher education institutions.

Hardest hit under IES has been NCSER. Despite a budget that is only two-thirds of what it was in 2005, research from NCSER helps inform educators and families of evidence-based interventions and strategies that support the development and academic success of children with disabilities. This includes strategies for improving early childhood special education; advancing reading, writing, and language development; supporting students with learning disabilities; educating students on the autism spectrum; and helping students transition to postsecondary education and careers.

The Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) conduct applied research that is directly relevant to state and district administrators, principals and teachers. RELs also ensure that research is shared widely through its deep dissemination networks. Recent work across the REL network has focused on literacy, including the development of a rubric for evaluating reading/language arts instructional materials for kindergarten to grade 5; a self-study guide for implementing early literacy interventions; and a study on time to language proficiency for Hispanic English learner students. With additional resources, the RELs could produce additional research-based materials so that educators may better serve these incredibly diverse regions.

Thank you for your attention to our request to appropriate \$670 million for IES in FY 2020. Our education system will be stronger in the future if we provide meaningful, sustained support for rigorous education research and evaluation today.


Sincerely,

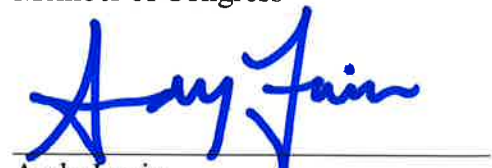

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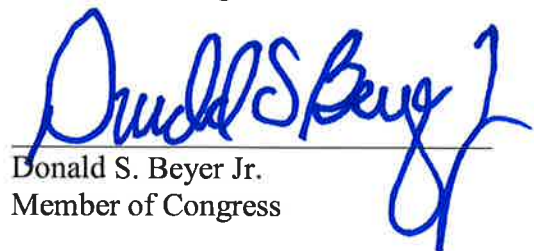
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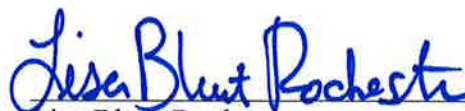
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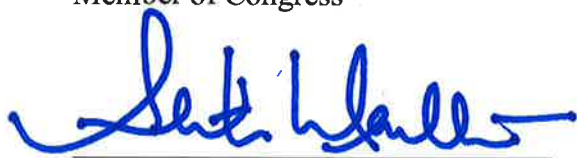
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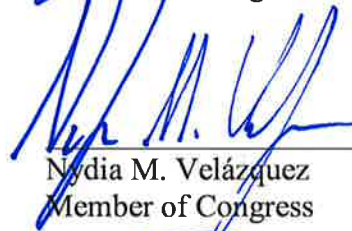
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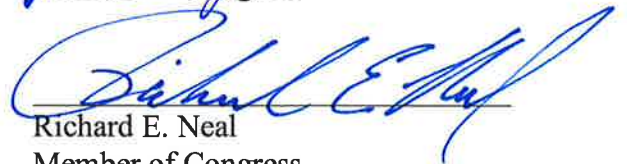
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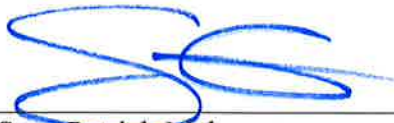
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