



February 27, 2018

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

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

The Honorable Tom Cole  
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 Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro,

We are writing on behalf of the Friends of IES, a coalition of organizations committed to supporting the essential role of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), to encourage you to provide \$670 million for IES in the FY 2018 Labor, Health & Human Services, Education, & Related Agencies appropriations bill. This level of funding would enable IES to best support important research; data collection and statistical analysis; and dissemination. This work contributes to a growing evidence base that informs effective and efficient educational practice and policy in our states and across the nation. This level of funding is essential to build upon the research and data infrastructure essential to state and local education leaders, restore cuts to critical programs, and increase funding for programs that have been stagnant for far too long.

IES is the independent and nonpartisan statistics, research, and evaluation arm of the U.S. Department of Education charged with providing and disseminating rigorous scientific evidence on which to ground education policy and practice. IES is comprised of four centers - National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Center for Education Research (NCER), National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) and National Center for Education Evaluation (NCEE) - that work collaboratively to most efficiently and comprehensively deliver the research and evidence to best address our nation's most pressing education challenges. This is a particularly important year for IES as the administration has recently nominated a permanent director for IES, a position that has not

been filled since the fall of 2014. A new permanent director has the opportunity to provide leadership for the field and drive new research initiatives to best serve students, teachers, and administrators.

State school leaders have spoken directly to the value of IES programs. In testimony to the House Education and Workforce Committee, Mississippi State Superintendent Carey Wright spoke to the value of her partnership with the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southeast and referred to the Mississippi's Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) as a 'key component of how we use data and research to drive our work at the local and state level.... and provides answers to critical research questions that help our state make strong policy decisions that are based in evidence.'" Robert Swiggum, Deputy Superintendent, Georgia Department of Education credited SLDS, to a large part, for reducing the drop-out rate in Georgia.

RELs are also making important progress on a wide range of education issues facing states. Recent highlights include identifying charter schools that, based on the demographics and social economic levels of students, were performing better than expected in both math and English. Continuation of this work, funding permitting, could further examine the common factors of the schools beating the odds and how to replicate those programs. In addition, RELs have developed expenditure to performance ratios using existing data to better understand the relationship between the level of investment per student and the student performance - an essential question to those responsible for spending tax payer dollars on education. Other RELs have made strides to supporting success for rural students examining what affects the likelihood of their postsecondary success.

In addition to the opportunity to build upon the progress of IES, this reflects a request to restore essential funding for significant cuts. For the past several years, the NCSER budget has been only two-thirds of what it was back in FY 2005. Much remains to be done in generating new knowledge to help children and youth with disabilities realize productive and successful lives. There is widespread agreement among educators and parents that additional practices, based on sound scientific research, are required to better understand how to educate and assess children and youth with disabilities effectively.

Due to a combination of cuts to the IES budget and the continued uncertainty about the budget, IES was unable to issue solicitations for the Statistical and Research Methodology in Education (SRME) program and the Research Training (RT) program. The SRME mission is "to provide rigorous evidence on which to ground education practice and policy and to encourage its use." This is a central function of IES with the potential to use existing studies and data to most efficiently and effectively answer remaining important questions in education. Failure to fund methodological projects prohibits the field from taking full advantage of data that already exists, or ensure that future studies are done in the most rigorous and efficient ways. Furthermore, cutting these valuable training grants raises concerns about the future pipeline of education research.

We thank you for your support of IES and urge you to strengthen the research foundations

of education by providing \$670 million to IES in the FY 2018 Labor, Health & Human Services, Education, & Related Agencies appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

American Educational Research Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Sociological Association  
American Statistical Association  
Association of American Universities  
Association of Population Centers  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities  
Carnegie Mellon University  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
Council for Exceptional Children  
EDGE Consulting LLC  
Education Development Center  
Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences  
Knowledge Alliance  
Learning and Education Academic Research Network (LEARN)  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
Penn State University  
Population Association of America  
Results for America  
Society for Research in Child Development  
University of Oregon  
University of Virginia  
University of Washington  
Vanderbilt University  
WestEd