

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education  
Appropriations Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education  
Appropriations Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Baldwin and Ranking Member Capito:

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we urge you to appropriate at least \$900 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. IES plays an important role in responding to needed educational recovery, ever more important in light of the declines seen in the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) math and reading assessments. IES also has funded research networks that are addressing the short- and long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in K-12 and postsecondary education. Its ongoing work is also critical to the use of evidence-based practices, increasing student achievement and addressing the mental health needs of students and the educator workforce.

Even with the increases to programs within the IES budget over the past few years, IES has been forced to curtail funding new research proposals, was unable to run competitions in education research and special education research, and delayed the administration of important statistical surveys due to limited funds. 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 traditionally underserved students by limiting the use of evidence necessary for them to learn and succeed.

Although IES research has produced great results, it has been highly constrained by limited investment. Several highly-rated grants were not awarded due to limited funding from the FY 2022 Education Research Grant competition, with IES unable to run this competition in FY 2023. This means many pressing questions that will continue to need to be addressed beyond the

pandemic will go unanswered, including in areas identified by the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine in its 2022 report, *The Future of Education Research at IES*. New opportunities for IES to support quick-turnaround, high-reward scalable solutions intended to significantly improve outcomes for students, alongside IES support of foundational research and training grants, require increased investment for Research, Development, and Dissemination.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has experienced severe funding constraints that affect the quality of its longitudinal surveys, particularly as the agency faces declining survey response rates. The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the need for data, and the recent School Pulse Panel, has illuminated on-the-ground, real-time information on the challenges facing K-12 education in emerging from the pandemic. Without adequate funding, this rapid data collection model and longitudinal surveys will be limited in its timeliness for research and policymaking. Similarly, the underinvestment in State Longitudinal Data Systems has resulted in states seeking grants to improve their own administrative data systems being turned away. Congress provided additional funding for NAEP, but is still below the pace of increased costs for the development and administration of tests.

Hardest hit under IES has been the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER). Despite operating under a budget that remains below the FY 2010 level, 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 emerging research needs, including educators and school-based service providers; access, participation, and successful completion of college for persons with disabilities; and special education financing.

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 by the RELs has been responsive to pressing issues, including REL Southeast research to advance evidence-based instruction in early childhood literacy in South Carolina. This work involved a partnership with the South Carolina Department of Education to implement the Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy. This work is all driven by the state education agencies and other stakeholders in the regions. Additional funding is needed to research and support growing local and regional needs to respond to the pandemic's effect on academic, social and emotional outcomes.

Thank you for your attention to our request to appropriate at least \$900 million for IES in FY 2024. Our education system will be stronger in the future if we provide meaningful, sustained support for rigorous education research and evaluation today.

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