

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 25, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we urge you to appropriate at least \$815 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, and in understanding the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. 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, 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 traditionally underserved students by limiting the use of evidence necessary for them to learn and succeed.

Most IES 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. 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 measures and assessments for career and technical education; the development and testing of education technology

products that can personalize instruction; and approaches to teacher recruitment, retention, certification, assessment, and compensation will 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.

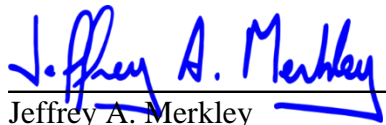
Additional investment in the NCES is needed so students and families can better understand institutional outcomes, such as enrollment, completion, and post-college success across programs and majors. This investment would also bring the added benefit of increasing transparency at our higher education 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.

Hardest hit under IES has been NCSER, which was unable to hold its annual research and training competitions in FY 2022 due to limited funding. 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 emerging research needs, including interventions to support the success of postsecondary students with disabilities, pre-service teacher preparation practices, and supporting students with low-incidence disabilities.

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 Midwest research to address teacher recruitment and retention, resulting in the “Welcome Back Proud Michigan Educator Campaign.” 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 \$815 million for IES in FY 2023. Our education system will be stronger in the future if we provide meaningful, sustained support for rigorous education research and evaluation today.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



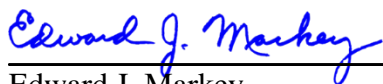
Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



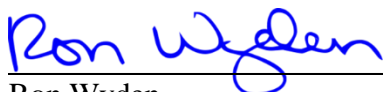
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



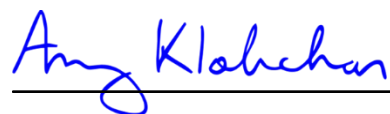
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
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Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
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