



April 27, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair, Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education &  
Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Ranking Member, Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education &  
Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chair, Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education &  
Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member, Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education &  
Related Agencies  
U.S House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Murray, Ranking Member Blunt, Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

We are writing on behalf of the Learning and Education Academic Research Network (LEARN) Coalition to express our support for increased funding for several key education research programs that your subcommittees will debate as part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 appropriations process. LEARN, a coalition of 41 leading research colleges of education across the country, supports critical investments in research aimed at advancing the scientific understanding of learning and development. We advocate for greater funding for these priorities across all Federal agencies, including the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Specifically, LEARN is requesting no less than \$815 million for IES overall with \$225 million dedicated to the Research, Development and Dissemination (RD&D) line item and \$70 million for the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER). Within the National Institutes of Health (NIH), LEARN requests that \$2.02 billion go towards NICHD and \$2.57 billion go towards NIMH. While advocating for these increased resources for FY2023, we want to express our appreciation for the increases for IES and NIH that were made in FY2022.

**Institute of Education Sciences**

As the primary Federal agency charged with supporting research for education practice and policy, IES is essential to developing a comprehensive, reliable, evidence base and ensuring that teaching and learning practices are grounded in this evidence base. Unfortunately, IES is only able to fund one out of every 10 applications it receives due to the limitations in its budget, despite a far greater percentage of such applications being rated excellent and worthy of funding. This is in great contrast to other Federal agencies doing similar work, for example, while remaining an unacceptably low rate, the NIH funds one out of every five applications.

Education research provides the bedrock of knowledge used by our principals, teachers, counselors and professors to help preK-12 students and those seeking a postsecondary education succeed. The increases provided to IES will support the continued examination of what works and what does not work to further our education system’s curricula, instructional techniques and assessments. This additional funding will bolster IES’ work in relation to education research overall as well as provide support as the nation works towards COVID-19 recovery. Given the importance of developing reliable evidence during this critical time, LEARN is requesting \$815 million for IES overall and \$225 million for the RD&D line item within IES.

In addition, we recommend that funding for research in special education, through NCSER, be increased to \$70 million. NCSER is the only Federal agency specifically designated to develop and provide evaluations for programs for students with disabilities, but currently has a budget that has remained relatively flat since FY2014. Research funded by NCSER provides special educators and administrators evidence-based resources that improve academic outcomes for children with or at risk of disabilities. Special education students were dramatically impacted by the change in schooling due to COVID-19; additional funding to NCSER is necessary to support data and evidence-based resources that will ensure a strong recovery for these students.

Of note, prominent experts have expressed concern over the relatively small amount of funding being provided to IES compared to other Federal research agencies. In a 2022 National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NAEM) report titled “[The Future of Education Research at IES](#),” a diverse panel of 17 experts in the field came to consensus that Congress should re-examine the IES budget as it is currently severely underfunded despite the continuously expanding work of IES. After hours of research and discussion, the panel recognized that IES funding “does not appear to be on par with that of other scientific funding agencies,” such as NIH or NSF, despite being charged to lead the nation’s education research agenda, collect and evaluate education research and disseminate evidence-based resources to classrooms nationwide. In alignment with this trusted outside evaluation, LEARN urges Congress to provide much needed fiscal support to IES by appropriating no less than \$815 million to the agency overall, \$225 million to the RD&D line item and \$70 million to NCSER.

### **National Institutes of Health**

There are critical education research programs within the NIH that also need additional support. NICHD is essential to education research as it examines brain functions and the impact of different educational services on learning and development. LEARN supports an increase in NICHD funding to \$2.02 billion. This increase will ensure that researchers can build on the knowledge already gained, evaluate what works best in treating developmental disorders and develop new research-based strategies to improve student’s learning and development. Additionally, it will support NICHD’s efforts to understand the long-term effects of COVID-19 on key at-risk populations, including the cognitive development of children and adolescents.

LEARN also supports an increase in funding for NIMH to \$2.57 billion. This increase will help further understanding of the behavioral, biological and environmental mechanisms necessary for developing interventions to reduce the burden of mental and behavioral disorders and optimize learning and development. At a time when the mental health impact to children and adolescents remains dire following the COVID-19 pandemic, this research is needed more now than ever.

The LEARN Coalition believes that collectively these key investments in education research will drive improvements in school, teacher and student performance in the coming years, strengthen the nation’s education infrastructure and ensure a strong, educated workforce in the long run. Thank you for considering these requests and please contact us if we can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

Camilla P. Benbow, Ed.D.

Co-Chair, Learning and Education Academic Research Network (LEARN)

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