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Wheelock College of Education and Human
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of Human Sciences

Johns Hopkins University
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College of Education and Human Development

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Written Testimony of the Learning and Education Academic Research Network (LEARN) as presented to the House Subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) by Dean Rick Ginsberg of the University of Kansas regarding Education Research Programs at IES and NIH.

May 26, 2022

Good Morning/Afternoon Chair DeLauro, Ranking Member Cole and members of the Labor, Health & Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Subcommittee. Thank you for welcoming me to testify today on behalf of the Learning and Education Academic Research Network (LEARN) Coalition on the importance of investing in Federal Education Research programs at the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and National Institutes of Health (NIH). I am here today to request 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). The LEARN Coalition is also requesting \$2.02 billion for the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and \$2.57 billion for the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

My name is Rick Ginsberg, and I have been the Dean of the School of Education at the University of Kansas for 17 years. In addition to my role as Dean, I am a Co-Chair of the LEARN Coalition – a coalition of 41 leading research colleges of education across the country which 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 and today I will be speaking on the need for increased funding towards IES, and two Institutes within NIH: NICHD and NIMH.

I want to start by noting that the LEARN coalition is deeply appreciative of the increases provided to IES and NIH in Fiscal Year 2022 and hope to build on this momentum in FY2023 to ensure that the nation's education research infrastructure continues to be strengthened.

In addition to these increases, we welcomed the creation of a program administration line item within IES in FY2022 and hope that strong funding in the long run for this line item will allow IES to fill critically needed staff positions, ensure their budget is further insulated and perhaps expand IES's capacity to provide two, rather than one, grant cycles a year. Prior to budget cuts in 2013, IES

was able to successfully run two grant cycles a year providing increased research opportunities to the field.

LEARN is also grateful for the inclusion of report language in FY2022 on the importance of the Administration appointing members to the National Board of Education Sciences (NBES). Unfortunately, NBES has been unable to meet due to a lack of quorum since 2016. It is evident that the lack of NBES members is a non-partisan issue as it spans across various Presidential Administrations and IES Directorships. While we understand that NBES can only be filled through Presidential appointment, we appreciate the Congressional desire to see NBES members appointed as soon as possible in order to support the IES Director in setting IES's agenda and research priorities. We encourage the Subcommittee to continue urging the Administration to fill these important roles.

Turning to the main purpose of my testimony, I am here today to request 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).

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. While only 12-15 percent of NCER and NCSER's applications have received awards over the last several years, the number of grant competitions offered by IES are currently severely limited due to chronic understaffing within the agency. Furthermore, NCSER was unable to fund all the grant applications rated outstanding or excellent in FY2021 due to a lack of sufficient funds. Such evidence displays how IES is currently too understaffed and underfunded to support the nation's education infrastructure to its potential.

The LEARN Coalition believes that 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. We believe that an appropriation of \$815 million for IES overall with \$225 million designated for RD&D 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's work in relation to education research overall as well as provide support as the nation works towards COVID-19 recovery.

IES is also integral to the education research training pipeline by providing key training and grant opportunities to increase the number of education researchers who can successfully conduct IES funded research. We believe that increased funding for IES overall will help support these efforts, particularly in diversifying who leads and works in the education research field.

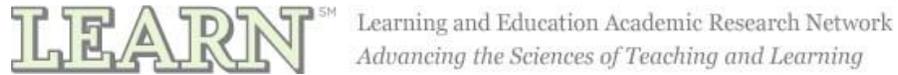
As the Subcommittee progresses through the FY2023 appropriations process, we want to highlight other prominent experts who have expressed concern over the relatively small amount of funding being provided to IES, especially in comparison to other Federal research agencies. The renowned National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) released a report in March titled “The Future of Education Research at IES.” In this report, the Academy urged Congress to provide increased appropriations for IES as it is severely underfunded despite a continuously expanding workload. After hours of research and discussion, the Academy’s committee recognized that IES funding “does not appear to be on par with that of other scientific funding agencies,” such as NIH or NSF. This low level of funding makes it difficult for IES to accomplish its charge of leading the nation’s education research agenda, collecting and evaluating education research and disseminating evidence-based resources to classrooms nationwide. The LEARN Coalition urges the Subcommittee to carefully evaluate this call for additional appropriations from this trusted outside report.

In addition to our request for IES overall, we urge Congress to provide \$70 million for special education research through NCSER. Despite being the only Federal agency specifically designated to develop and provide evaluations of programs aimed at students with disabilities, NCSER currently has a budget that has remained relatively flat since FY2014. This has negatively impacted the research that provides special educators and administrators the evidence-based resources needed to improve academic outcomes for students with or at risk of disabilities. With many special education students dramatically impacted by the change in schooling due to COVID-19, the LEARN Coalition finds that additional funding for NCSER is necessary to support data and evidence-based resources that will ensure a strong recovery for these students.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize the importance of increased NIH funding. The LEARN Coalition was disappointed that the President’s FY2023 Budget Request did not include a healthy increase for the base NIH budget and rather focused on increasing ARPA-H. ARPA-H funding should supplement not supplant base NIH funding. Specifically, we believe two NIH programs – NICHD and NIMH – require strong Federal funding in FY2023. Both programs provide critical funding to investigate the science behind learning and development, particularly for vulnerable groups.

This is why the LEARN Coalition is requesting \$2.02 billion for NICHD to examine brain functions and the impact of different educational services on learning and development. 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 again for considering these requests. I am happy to answer any questions.

Thank you,
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Dean of the School of Education, University of Kansas