



April 7, 2025

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
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

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

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

Dear Chairs Aderholt and Capito and Ranking Members DeLauro and Baldwin,

We write on behalf of 72 organizations representing the Friends of IES, a coalition committed to supporting the essential role of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). In light of actions since February, we are deeply concerned with the measures taken by this administration that have had significant impacts on the agency that produces evidence on the educational progress of our nation's students and informs practices to improve education outcomes. **We urge you to provide at least \$900 million for IES in the FY 2026 Labor, Health & Human Services, Education, & Related Agencies appropriations bill**, which would maintain and strengthen essential activities that support the success of our nation's schools. In addition, we call upon you to ensure that funding for IES provided in the FY 2025 continuing resolution remains available for IES to use consistent with the FY 2024 explanatory statement.

As an independent, nonpartisan branch of the U.S. Department of Education authorized under the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA), IES collaboratively works across its programs to meet its mission. These congressionally-mandated activities include providing information on the condition and progress of education, developing evidence-based educational practices that support learning and improve academic achievement and access to educational opportunities for all students, and evaluating the effectiveness of federal and other education programs. Funding for IES represents less than one percent of the full Department of Education budget, though its impact is far-reaching through the use of research, data, and evidence-based resources to inform education policy and practice at the state and local levels and through the evaluation of education programs.

We acknowledge the circumstances under which the budget process for FY 2026 is unfolding as the Department of Education initiated a reduction in force (RIF) resulting in a

significant decrease in IES staff. The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) also cancelled many contracts that support the essential functions that Congress has mandated IES undertake, and that were directly supporting students, educators, and district and state leaders to improve academic achievement.

Without full reinstatement of these contracts and in the absence of a significant staff presence that would be supported under this \$900 million request, access to data and evidence-based resources that students, families, and educators rely on will be lost, and promising proposals for timely and relevant education research to inform education policy and practice will go unfunded. Investment across IES programs, as highlighted in explanatory statements prior to FY 2025, is essential for evidence-based decision-making in education across the nation.

The **Research, Development, and Dissemination (RD&D)** line item supports research and development grants in emerging topic areas and longstanding challenges in education policy and practice through the National Center for Education Research (NCER). The RD&D line also supports the synthesis and dissemination of evidence-based resources through the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). All of this work has been paused – including finalizing awards from FY 2025 NCER competitions – due to the cancellation of contracts.

The RD&D line is one of the primary federal funding sources for basic and applied education research grants and training grants that develop the methodological skills of future generations of the education research workforce. Grants funded through FY 2024 NCER competitions include a co-design of mixed-reality tools to provide real-time awareness and decision support to middle school mathematics teachers; a partnership with the Washington Student Achievement Council to examine school-to-work pathways; and a national research and development center for improving rural postsecondary education.

Investment within RD&D is critical to support research that drives the development of evidence-based education programs, and addresses research needs such as reliable and valid assessments of technical and career readiness skills in career and technical education, what artificial intelligence (AI) tools mean for literacy and what specific literacy skills learners must acquire, and how technology and other innovations can be used to ease the demands on teachers and address other factors contributing to teacher shortages. Increased funding for RD&D can also expand the Accelerate, Transform, and Scale initiative to develop and scale innovative, quick turnaround, evidence-based research and tools with the potential for breakthroughs in teaching and learning.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), one of the 13 federal principal statistical agencies, provides objective data, statistics, and reports on the condition of education in the United States. NCES works with stakeholders to provide relevant data

through administrative and longitudinal surveys, but limited funding in the **Statistics** line over the past decade has constrained NCES in its capacity to collect and report key education indicators. In addition, the contract cancellations in February and RIF have currently halted actions for many NCES surveys in the field that collect data required under ESRA.

Even before the contract cancellations and RIF, resource constraints have threatened NCES's ability to facilitate the participation of U.S. students in international assessments such as the 2027 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). Holding back U.S. participation in international assessments would limit our understanding of how U.S. students compare globally on reading, math, and science achievement. Investment in the Statistics line would help restore the agency's capacity to collect and analyze data on timely education issues, including through the School Pulse Survey, and sustain important longitudinal studies and administrative data collections – such as the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, High School & Beyond, the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey, and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System – that are the basis for informing policy actions.

NCES also provides critical investment in **State Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS)**, which have helped states link K-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems to gain a better understanding of education and workforce outcomes. States receiving grants in 2023 have worked to modernize systems to be more responsive to stakeholder needs, incorporate artificial intelligence tools, and include school finance indicators. Additional funding for SLDS would ensure that states have the full capacity to carry out additional grants for states to enhance data quality, develop data governance structures, and pilot innovative measures.

The Nation's Report Card, NAEP, provides essential educational indicators on the progress of the nation's students and schools. The 2024 results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have made clear the need to ensure that our nation's lowest performing students have the supports they need in order to excel in reading and math. Funding for NAEP is essential to administer mandatory NAEP assessments, update assessment frameworks, and report NAEP results. Additional resources for the **Assessment** line can support implementing innovations to incorporate adaptive testing, the joint R&D agenda that NCES and the National Assessment Governing Board have been undertaking, and the administration of voluntary NAEP assessments such as civics and science to produce state-level results.

The Research in Special Education line supports research and training grants within the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER). NCSER is the only federal agency specifically designated to develop and provide comprehensive research and evaluations for programs for students with disabilities from infancy through postsecondary education, but

has a budget that remains below its FY 2010 funding level of \$70 million. 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.

For its FY 2025 Special Education Research Grant competition – currently on hold due to a cancelled contract to support peer review activities – NCSER only sought applications focused on education systems due to resource constraints for funding new research grants. Even with the success that NCSER-supported work has had to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, there are several important research needs that could be funded in special education with increased investment in NCSER. These topics include the examination of preservice training programs and how they relate to outcomes for teachers and students with disabilities, existing policies and practices at higher education institutions and how faculty can better support students with disabilities, and the use of AI to improve special education diagnostics, assessment, and intervention across all disability categories.

The Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) generate research, evidence and tools that are driven by the needs identified by state and district administrators, principals, and teachers. RELs also ensure that research is shared widely through deep dissemination networks. Recent work by the RELs has been responsive based on individual states’ contexts – much of which is currently at risk due to cancelled contracts. Examples of this work include the Employability Skills Partnership, a partnership between REL Midwest and Indianapolis Public Schools to strengthen work-based learning experiences within the school district’s career and technical education (CTE) programs; a partnership between REL Central with the Nebraska Department of Education to support the implementation of the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act; and a partnership between REL West and the Utah State Board of Education to address factors that influence the retention of early career teachers in the state. Additional investment in the RELs can further support partnerships that can leverage research and data into evidence-based solutions.

Since the establishment of IES, many of its core functions have been supported through the use of contracts. These range from support to hold peer review panels for NCER and NCSER research and training grant competitions; data collection and reporting at NCES, including the administration of NAEP; the functions of the RELs; and the production of translational tools through the WWC. The cancellation of IES contracts by DOGE and resulting RIF have demonstrated the importance of maintaining these contracts throughout all of IES, as well as the need for in-house capacity and expertise to effectively administer IES activities. We urge attention to **the Program Administration line**, established to provide additional flexibility for IES to hire staff to most effectively meet IES’s mission. Sufficient resources in this budget line should be aligned in order for IES to conduct mandated activities in ESRA and other laws.

We urge Congress to appropriate at least \$900 million for IES in FY 2026, allocated by program line, which would sustain and expand the capacity for IES to advance innovative research, develop the methodological skills of education researchers, and continue to support high-quality and trustworthy statistics and evidence-based resources. In addition, we strongly encourage ensuring that FY 2025 funding is used for reinstating cancelled contracts, restarting ongoing research and training grant competitions that were underway, and continuing other mandated functions that drive improvements in educational outcomes and support student and educator success.

Sincerely,

AACTE: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
Advance Illinois
Advanced Education Research and Development Fund (AERDF)
Alliance for Learning Innovation
American Educational Research Association
American Mathematical Society
American Psychological Association Services
American Statistical Association
Applied Learning Insights, LLC
Association of American Universities
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Boston University
Brown University
Carnegie Mellon University
CAST
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council for Exceptional Children
Council for Exceptional Children, Division of Research
Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD)
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA)
EDGE Consulting Partners
EdSolutions
Education Modified
Education Reform Now
EduDream
ETS
Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences
FigStar Learning

Flux: The Society for Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience
Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce
InnovateEDU
Institute for Advancing Computing Education
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
Knowledge Alliance
LEARN Coalition
Learnology Labs
Lede Labs
Lehigh University
Magnolia Consulting, LLC
Menlo Education Research
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council on Measurement in Education
National Council on Teacher Quality
National Education Association
NYU CREATE
P20 Strategies LLC
Penn State University
PLACE, LLC
Population Association of America
Prepared To Teach
Reading Recovery of North America
Research Alliance for NYC Schools
Results for America
Rice University
RMC Research Corporation
Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD)
Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness
Society of Experimental Psychologists
Software & Information Industry Association
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children (TED)
Teachers College
The Concord Consortium
The National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment
University of California System
University of California, Merced
University of Oregon
University of Virginia
University of Washington College of Education
Vanderbilt University