Friends of IES

Institute of Education Sciences

February 5, 2024

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairs Granger and Murray, Ranking Member DeLauro, Vice Chair Collins,

We write on behalf of the Friends of IES, a coalition of 35 organizations committed to supporting the essential role of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). **As work continues on FY 2024 appropriations, we urge that the final legislation package include the highest possible amount for IES and does not cut funding for IES programs.** While we recognize the budget caps provided in the Fiscal Responsibility Act constrain funding, there continues to be a strong need for evidence-based tools supported by IES to accelerate and transform learning. For our students to succeed and to be internationally competitive, we must make robust investments in the science of teaching and learning and we must have the necessary data to make evidence-based decisions on allocating education dollars.

We appreciate the maintenance of funding for many of the IES budget line items in the House and Senate bills despite the fiscal constraints. This is particularly important with IES using appropriated funds for unobligated amounts rescinded from the American Rescue Plan-supported grants awarded by the National Center for Education Research (NCER) and the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER). In turn, NCSER was not able to award all the FY 2023 grant applications that were eligible to be funded through the Special Education Research Grants program. This shortchanges important research to improve special education teaching and learning, ultimately harming some of our most at-risk learners.

At the same time, the House bill would eliminate funding for two vital programs within IES, the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) and the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs). These programs are essential for modernizing data systems to gain a better understanding of education and workforce outcomes and for the translation of research into policy and practice.

The SLDS program has served as a key resource for states to develop and expand their administrative data systems. The next round of grants to be funded in FY 2024 will focus on state efforts for data use in infrastructure and interoperability, college and career, school finance, and state policy questions. Since 2021, NCER has funded grants for partnerships

between state education agencies and researchers to examine SLDS data to answer key state policy questions. Many of these grants also are focusing on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on key education indicators such as school enrollment. Eliminating funding for the SLDS program would significantly impede infrastructure modernization efforts needed to create more nimble and flexible data systems while also maintaining student privacy.

The RELs engage in research-practice partnerships that conduct applied research that is directly relevant to state and district administrators, principals, and teachers. RELs also ensure that research is shared widely through dissemination networks. As examples of how RELs are addressing timely and relevant education issues, partnerships developed through REL Northwest with the Alaska's Lower Kuskokwim School District, REL Central with the South Dakota Department of Education, and REL Southwest with the Louisiana Department of Education are currently implementing evidence-based strategies to address educator recruitment and retention. Eliminating funding for this long-established program would dramatically decrease opportunities for states and school districts to build evidence-based policy and practice.

IES plays a critical role in producing research findings that include testing and scaling up of evidence-based programs, highlighting education statistics on important topics, and developing resources that translate research into practice. As the U.S. education system continues to address the effects of COVID-19 on academic outcomes and student and teacher mental health, further cuts to IES would limit the foundational and transformative work needed to inform evidence-based policy and practice.

We strongly urge Congress to include the highest possible amount for IES as part of a final FY 2024 package, preserving existing investments into the science of teaching and learning.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Learning Innovation
American Chemical Society
American Educational Research Association
American Institutes for Research (AIR)
American Mathematical Society
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychological Association Services
American Statistical Association
Association of American Universities
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU)
Carnegie Mellon University
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education

EDGE Partners
ETS
Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education (HECSE)
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
Knowledge Alliance
LEARN Coalition
Lehigh University
Literacy Research Association
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council on Teacher Quality
Penn State University
Population Association of America
Results for America
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children (TED)
The Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD)
The University of Virginia
University of Oregon
University of Washington College of Education
Vanderbilt University