



July 21, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We greatly appreciate the actions of Congress thus far in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and the critical public health, educational, and economic needs that states and localities face in preventing the spread of the virus. As 21 members of the Friends of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), we write to urge that the \$200 million for IES in the bipartisan Research Investment to Spark the Economy (RISE) Act (HR 7308) be included in the next COVID relief and stimulus funding package. This amount would provide funding relief and flexibility for faculty, postdoctoral researchers, and graduate students who have had their research disrupted by school closures; ensure the continued collection of education statistics essential to monitoring the educational impacts of COVID-19; and support the development of evidence-based resources for educators and families facing an expected elongated period of continued distance learning into the upcoming school year.

As the independent, nonpartisan agency supporting education research and statistics within the Department of Education, IES is positioned to provide data on the impact of school closures on students, teachers, and school leaders; gauge the extent of learning loss incurred with the shift to distance learning (e.g., “COVID-19 slide”); address how teachers, counselors, families, and community resources are adapting to new educational and socioemotional needs of students; and support the transition of new and current research projects to hybrid online/in-school modes of teaching and learning.

As noted in an April 9 [Education Week article](#), up to 500 grants funded by IES were underway before the closure of schools in March. Many of these projects involved interventions used in classrooms across the nation. Thus, IES research grantees have had their data collection curtailed and have needed to transition their work to account for the sudden shift from in-school to distance learning. We anticipate additional challenges in the

2020-21 school year due to uncertainties around whether education researchers will be allowed in schools when they reopen, how best to study learning developments and delays in an educational environment that itself is in flux, and the reality that classroom teaching will look very different once it resumes.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, IES has worked to address questions from educators, policymakers, and families. As examples, REL Mid-Atlantic recently published guidance that the Pennsylvania Department of Education used in the development of evidence-based guidelines for re-opening schools, and the What Works Clearinghouse is conducting a rapid synthesis of distance learning programs to develop a resource of effective interventions. Yet, there are needs and additional activities that funding for IES included in the RISE Act could support:

- Providing flexibility and additional financial supports for current research grants funded through the National Center for Education Research and National Center for Special Education Research. With school closures and needs to protect personally identifiable information, disruptions to both data collection and data access have limited research work. Additional flexibility for extending current research grants will also allow early career scholars and graduate students the opportunity to continue working on IES-funded projects.
- Administering the 2021 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests in 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math and reading, if the assessments move forward as scheduled in February 2021. Supplemental funding is necessary for additional field staff that would be required to ensure that NAEP is conducted as safely as possible.
- Conducting a large-scale study to understand the potential long-term impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic will have on educational outcomes, as well as the impact of potential state and local revenue shortfalls on education broadly. Any large-scale study should be attentive to traditionally underserved students – including students of color, students with disabilities, and English learners.
- Supporting set-aside funding for a program similar to the Rapid Response Research (RAPID) program at the National Science Foundation that can help address immediate needs, such as bridging the digital divide across K-12 and postsecondary education, remote accessibility for students with disabilities, and professional development for teachers adapting to instruction in online settings.
- Adding questions to National Center for Education Statistics surveys on COVID-19. We can point to questions added to the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study of 2020 as one example to provide data on the impact of COVID-19 in higher education.
- Expanding the capacity of the Regional Educational Laboratories to provide technical assistance and resources to states and districts, and develop evidence-based resources on distance learning.

As the nation continues to grapple with the unknowns of the COVID-19 pandemic, funding for IES included in the RISE Act will be helpful in informing further response to the pandemic, as well as provide relief for IES grantees who develop and test education

programs to improve educational outcomes. Thank you for your attention to our request to provide \$200 million in a future supplemental funding package for IES.

Sincerely,

American Educational Research Association  
American Psychological Association  
Association of American Universities  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
Council for Exceptional Children  
Council of Administrators of Special Education  
EDGE Consulting Partners  
ETS  
Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences  
Florida State University  
Knowledge Alliance  
LEARN Coalition  
Lehigh University  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
National Council on Teacher Quality  
Society for Research in Child Development  
University of Florida  
University of Oregon  
University of Virginia  
Vanderbilt University