



March 23, 2026

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 40 organizations representing the Friends of IES, a coalition committed to supporting the essential role of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). We appreciate the maintenance of nearly all funding for IES in FY 2026 and the inclusion of line-item allocations in the FY 2026 bill text. **We encourage you to provide \$900 million for IES in the FY 2027** 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 urge the inclusion of bill language to ensure that FY 2026 and FY 2027 funds provided to IES are apportioned according to the charts in the explanatory text and are obligated and spent expeditiously, in alignment with the final FY 2026 LHHS law. Lastly, we urge the subcommittees to maintain provisions from the FY 2026 LHHS law that includes the IES individual line items in the bill text.

As a semi-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 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.

As IES moves forward to advance research and data on longstanding and emerging priority topics in education, continues to support partnerships between researchers and schools to develop and scale evidence-based practice, and maintains activities to fulfill statutory requirements, IES will need adequate resources and staff. Investment across IES programs 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).

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. The investment in NCER research grants has resulted in programs used in classrooms across the nation to drive evidence-based reading practices, including the Strategic Adolescent Reading Intervention, and UFLI Foundations.

In FY 2025, several NCER research grant opportunities through the Education Research Grants program sought to address gaps in research in key areas, including the impact of middle school CTE programs and work-based learning on education outcomes; how best to teach, develop, and assess writing skills across elementary and secondary school; and the evaluation of approaches to district or school organization or funding.

We were dismayed to learn that this FY 2025 grant competition and NCER FY 2025 training grant competitions were closed out without making new awards, after submitted proposals went unreviewed for over a year. We are also concerned that the announcement of funding opportunities for FY 2026 has been significantly delayed. This inaction has meant that teachers and district and state education leaders will be limited in access to high-quality, evidence-based interventions that meet current needs. We urge your subcommittees, as part of your oversight work this year, to press the IES and the Department to reestablish the statutorily required peer review process and launch new funding opportunities.

As IES hopefully works with the Department to restart peer review and launch new funding opportunities, increased funding for RD&D would allow IES to broaden the amount of funding for fundamental education research and 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 has constrained NCES in its capacity to collect and report key education indicators.

With a significantly reduced staff, NCES has maintained core administrative collections, and even expanded the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. At the same time, longitudinal studies valued by state departments of education, superintendents, and researchers to understand nationally-representative trends across the education continuum have generally remained paused since last year's contract cancellations. NCES also failed for the first time last year to meet the deadline for the congressionally-mandated Condition of Education, which when released had significantly fewer indicators than in prior years.¹

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. In addition, as NCES considers updates to how it may develop new frameworks to collect representative data over time, funding will be critical to support the development of survey items, and analyze and report data on important education indicators.

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 information on the academic outcomes 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 work toward expanding an assessment scheduled for voluntary NAEP assessments

¹ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-u-s-department-of-education-is-far-behind-on-producing-key-statistics/>

that have been significantly cut back, advancing the joint activities by NCES and the National Assessment Governing Board to support NextGen NAEP, and producing state-level results in voluntary NAEP assessments such as civics and science.

The Research in Special Education line supports research and training grants within the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSEER). NCSEER 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. NCSEER 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 NCSEER only sought applications focused on education systems due to resource constraints for funding new research grants. We remain concerned that awards for the FY 2025 grant cycle for this program have not been made, and were dismayed to learn that other FY 2025 NCSEER research and training competitions were recently closed out without making new awards. We are also concerned that the announcement of funding opportunities for FY 2026 has been significantly delayed. As with the request for NCER, we urge the subcommittees to conduct oversight this year aimed at reestablishing statutorily required peer review and ensuring the launch of new NCSEER funding opportunities.

Even with the success that NCSEER-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 NCSEER. 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. One important example is the 10 REL Toolkits which provide practical, accessible, research-based professional learning resources aligned with the WWC practice guides across areas such as literacy, writing mathematics, and postsecondary learning through technology. The toolkits are designed to streamline planning and instruction and include adaptable materials that can be customized for different educator roles and easily tailored to meet the unique needs of students. The toolkits include educator implementation tools,

professional learning modules aligned to evidence-based recommendations, video models of instructional routines, classroom-ready implementation resources, facilitator guides for professional learning communities, and supports for school and district leaders overseeing implementation. Additional investment in the RELs can further support partnerships that can leverage research and data into evidence-based solutions.

Many of the IES core functions have been supported through the use of contracts as well as in-house capacity and expertise to effectively administer IES activities. These range from support to hold peer review panels for NCER and NCSEER 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. 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 with what is necessary for IES to fulfill its statutory responsibilities.

We urge Congress to appropriate \$900 million for IES in FY 2027, 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 Congress to ensure that the Department obligates FY 2026 and FY funding by line item so that it can be spent in a timely manner to meet IES's statutory requirements. Lastly, we urge the subcommittees to maintain provisions from the FY 2026 LHHS law that includes the IES individual line items in the bill text. The federal investment in IES informs evidence-based education policy and practice that drive improvements in educational outcomes and support student and educator success.

Sincerely,

Agora Education Research
Alliance for Learning Innovation
American Educational Research Association
American Mathematical Society
American Psychological Association Services
American Statistical Association
Association of American Universities
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU)
Boston University
CAST
CEC Division for Research
Coalition for Community Schools

Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
EDGE Partners
Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences
Institute for Educational Leadership
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
Johns Hopkins University
Knowledge Alliance
LEARN Coalition
Lehigh University, College of Education
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National Council on Teacher Quality
National Education Association
Penn State University
Population Association of America
Results for America
Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD)
Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
University of California System
University of Oregon
University of Washington College of Education
Vanderbilt University