Alliance For Learning Innovation

April 7, 2025

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

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

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

On behalf of the Alliance for Learning Innovation (ALI)—a coalition that brings together education nonprofits, philanthropy, and the private sector to advocate for building a better research and development (R&D) infrastructure in education—we respectfully write to request robust funding for education research and development (R&D) in the fiscal year 2026 appropriations bills. There is a vital opportunity in education to drive innovation by using research and development to identify, test, and scale solutions to enhance learner outcomes. States are at the center of education, and education R&D needs federal support to modernize state longitudinal data systems (SLDS), leverage artificial intelligence and technology platforms, and provide technical assistance to support and enable local education R&D efforts.

Federal investments in education R&D undergird critical educational practices, including the science of reading. "Large-scale federal investment by the U.S. Institute of Education Sciences (IES)… [was] charged with focusing on improving reading comprehension for students in pre-K through grade 12." This investment has generated practice guides for teaching foundational reading skills to students in kindergarten and curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities and/or autism. IES and NSF are supporting the use of AI to tackle critical educational challenges. This includes a project "to advance artificial intelligence (AI) and create the technology to assist speech-language pathologists (SLPs) with identifying students in need of speech and language services and delivering individualized interventions."

The need for innovation in education is apparent. The "Nation's Report Card," a national test of fourth- and eighth-grade students' reading and math abilities, revealed that one-third of eighth graders cannot pick out the main idea of a text, and one-quarter of fourth graders scored "below basic" in math. Lagging student achievement in STEM subjects poses a direct threat to America's national security. Investing in education R&D can reverse these trends. Federal support for education R&D can provide local and state

educators the data they need to make better decisions on what programs would most benefit their students. This approach respects local autonomy and ensures evidence-based practices drive decision-making. Education R&D is critical to the development of innovative school models, democratizing research, and addressing challenges like half of school districts nationwide not having enough special education teachers.

Strong investment in IES, the Department of Education's (ED) Education Innovation and Research Program (EIR), and the education and workforce efforts at the National Science Foundation (NSF), will ensure that R&D is the engine that drives evidence-based, innovative improvements to teaching and learning and bolster career pathways to prepare the future workforce. "While improvements to the current R&D structure can and should be examined, debated, and made, now is not the time to pull back on these critical federal investments. The impacts of the Reduction In Force and cancellation of IES contracts including the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) and core data collections and federal program evaluations pose real threats to the ability of IES to meet its congressional [mandate] to provide "national leadership in expanding fundamental knowledge and understanding of education from early childhood through postsecondary study, in order to provide parents, educators, students, researchers, policymakers, and the general public with reliable information."

These funding requests will ensure that IES can provide the statistics, research, and evaluation needed to support educators, parents, policymakers, and the public.

Federal investments in education R&D will serve as a downpayment for what will be needed to innovate in the future.

Within the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (Labor-H) bill, we respectfully request that Congress provide:

- At least $900 million for the Institute of Education Sciences. Within this amount, ALI requests continued support for the Accelerate, Transform, and Scale initiative, Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS), and the School Pulse Panel.

- $284 million for ED's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education's Education Innovation and Research (EIR) program, including support for projects building career-connected learning opportunities, utilization of AI, AR/VR, and other emerging technologies.

Within the Commerce, Justice, Science bill, we urge Congress to provide:

- At least $1.246 billion for the STEM EDU Directorate at NSF and continued support for scaling and sustaining STEM education research.

- At least $50 million for Economic Development Administration (EDA) Workforce Training Grants.

ALI strongly encourages the exclusion of further rescissions to SLDS funding and strongly advocates for examining the February 2025 cuts made to IES and ED grants and contracts. ALI also encourages Congress to ensure IES and other federal agencies have the appropriate staffing levels needed to ensure good stewardship of tax-payer resources and functioning of programs critical to support all students.

Sincerely,

Accelerate
AERDF
American Chemical Society
Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC)
Aurora Institute
Bart Epstein
Bror Saxberg / LearningForge LLC
CAST
Committee for Children
Data Quality Campaign
Digital Promise
Earth Force
Edge Consulting Partners
Education Development Center
Education Modified
Education Reform Now
Education Reimagined
Educurious
Evidence Advocacy Center
Excel in Ed
Federation of American Scientists
Foundation for American Innovation
Getting Smart
GreatSchools.org
High Tech High Graduate School of Education
Imagine Network
InnovateEDU
In Tandem
International Center for EdTech Impact
ISTE + ASCD

JeffWeld LLC

Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop

Jody Britten, PhD

KB Stack Consulting

Knowledge Alliance

Learner-Centered Collaborative

Modern States

National Center on Education and the Economy

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics

National Girls Collaborative Project

National Parents Union

National School Boards Association

National Science Teaching Association (NSTA)

New America, PreK-12 Education Program

New Classrooms

New Leaders

Project Evident

Results For America

RTI International

SERP Institute

SETDA

SRI International

Surge Institute

Teach For America

Teach Plus

The Education Trust

The Human Potential L.A.B.

The Learning Agency

The Tech Interactive

Thomas B. Fordham Institute

Throughline Learning

TIES

Transcend Education

Women Leading Ed