



November 24, 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 Cole and Collins, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Vice Chair Murray,

We write on behalf of the Friends of IES, a coalition of 40 organizations committed to supporting the essential role of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) in producing the evidence that informs education policy and practice. **As work continues for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 appropriations, we urge you to include the highest possible amount for the IES top line in the final bill and include funding amounts for individual IES authorities and programs in the bill text.** As part of a final conference report, we encourage the inclusion of language directing IES to restart peer review panels for FY 2025 grant competitions from the National Center for Education Research (NCER) and the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) and to ensure sufficient staff capacity across IES programs.

The current efforts by the Department of Education to redesign IES call for robust and sustained investment into ongoing activities and emerging priorities for research, data collection and reporting, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and the development and promotion of evidence-based resources. IES will need sufficient staff and infrastructure capacity supported by a strong funding level for the IES top line and continued funding for the Program Administration line within IES to implement future activities informed by a recent Request for Information (RFI).

We were encouraged to see the continued allocation of IES programs by line item in the House and Senate FY 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) bills, as well as the language in the Senate bill that would bind those line items to law. We appreciate the maintenance of the current funding level of \$793.1 million for the IES top line and levels for programs in the Senate bill. We also were pleased to see the commitment to current funding levels for many of the IES budget line items in the House bill, in addition to the increase provided in the Statistics line. We are concerned, however, with the proposed elimination of funding for the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) in the House bill.

The RELs serve as an important connection between research and practice, with researchers working with states and districts to develop evidence-based resources for teaching and learning that respond to their specific needs. REL Southeast played a pivotal role in the improvements in reading outcomes seen in Mississippi as the state implemented evidence-based reading instruction throughout its schools.

RELs have taken a key role in synthesizing and translating evidence into actionable practices. Recent activities include Rethinking Responsive Education Ventures (RREV), where REL Northeast & Islands is supporting eight Maine districts to help them better understand how to use research and data to assess and improve innovation implementation. In addition, REL Southwest developed a partnership with the Oklahoma State Department of Education and school districts in Oklahoma to build educator capacity in using research-based early learning practices to improve student academic outcomes. Eliminating funding for this long-established program would dramatically decrease opportunities for states and school districts to build evidence-based policy and practice.

The RELs were among some of the contracts that have been restored since the initial set of cancellations by the administration in February. In addition to the important work of the RELs, contracts have been reinstated for several core administrative and longitudinal data collections conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and activities such as disclosure risk review that facilitate the publication of work using NCES restricted-use data. The work of these contractors is vital to ensuring that IES can provide relevant research and evidence-informed resources, and for NCES to provide timely data.

At the same time, other activities that had been underway prior to February continue to remain paused, such as the consideration of many of the FY 2025 NCER and NCSER grant competitions by peer review panels. While limited new grants had been awarded, applicants otherwise have been left in the dark on the status of their FY 2025 research and training grant proposals, limiting the opportunities for advancing timely and relevant research that connects directly with schools, students, and the education workforce across the education ecosystem. We urge the committee to address this inaction by directing IES to resume the process for FY 2025 grant proposal peer review.

Over the past few months, IES has been tasked with modernizing processes and furthering activities to increase the use of IES-funded research and evidence-based resources as part of the Department of Education's effort to redesign IES. NCES has been directed to include an Admissions and Consumer Transparency Supplement in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, even though there are only currently a few staff within NCES to implement such an extensive update.

Considering all of these factors, robust funding and staff capacity are essential to continue and expand IES's role in producing evidence to inform education policy and practice. These activities – in collaboration with state and local policymakers, educators, and K-12 and higher education leadership – include testing and scaling up evidence-based programs, producing high-quality education statistics on timely priority topics, and developing resources that translate research into practice, including through the Accelerate, Transform, and Scale (ATS) initiative.

Thus, we strongly urge Congress to include the highest possible amount for the IES top line and list allocations for individual IES line items in the final FY 2026 bill language, while preserving existing investments into the science of teaching and learning.

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
Boston University
Carnegie Mellon University
CAST
CEC Division for Research
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 & Brain Sciences
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
Knowledge Alliance
LEARN Coalition
Lehigh University, College of Education
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of School Psychologists
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National Council on Measurement in Education
Population Association of America
Rice University
Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD)
Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
UCLA
University at Buffalo, Graduate School of Education
University of Minnesota College of Education & Human Development
University of Oregon
University of Virginia
University of Washington College of Education
Vanderbilt University