

Advocates for Literacy

April XX, 2019

Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of Advocates for Literacy, a coalition of over 60 organizations that understands the imperative role of literacy -- reading and writing -- in creating a globally competent workforce, thank you for your past support of the Literacy for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) program, which builds on the success of the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) program. As you work to draft the FY 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we urge you to reject the administration's FY 2020 budget proposal to eliminate the LEARN program and instead continue funding this critically important comprehensive literacy program at no less than \$190 million. Further, we are concerned that if the Budget Control Act's FY 2020 and FY 2021 spending caps are not raised for non-defense discretionary spending, K-12 education programs like LEARN will suffer due to disproportionate cuts. This could severely impact schools, districts and students.

The LEARN program builds on the success of the SRCL program where states implementing comprehensive literacy plans have seen significant improvements in English Language Arts achievement in districts and schools serving disadvantaged students. Eleven states (Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, New Mexico, Ohio, and Oklahoma), the Bureau of Indian Education, and four territories currently have SRCL grants. With these grants, districts will be able to support high-quality professional development for teachers, principals, and specialized instructional support personnel to improve literacy instruction for struggling readers and writers, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

The literacy skills our students need today are much more complex than they were 50 years ago. Creating a globally competent workforce depends on students using their reading and writing skills to develop important abilities in such areas as math, science, technology, and manufacturing. Yet despite the fundamental importance of reading and writing, only 35 percent of fourth-graders and 35 percent of eighth-grade students performed at or above the proficient level in the 2017 Reading assessment of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) -- the Nation's Report Card. Of the more than 500,000 students who leave U.S. high schools each year without a diploma, many have low literacy skills. Research clearly demonstrates that a high-quality, literacy-rich environment beginning in early childhood is one of the most important factors in determining school readiness and success, high school graduation, college access and success, and workforce readiness.

A strong federal commitment to literacy is imperative. LEARN supports states in a comprehensive, systemic approach to strengthen evidenced-based literacy and early literacy instruction for children from early learning through high school and supports district capacity to accelerate reading and writing achievement for all students. The member organizations of Advocates for Literacy urge you to allocate no less than \$190 million in the FY 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill for the LEARN program to support reading and writing achievement.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and we hope we can count on your support again this year.

Sincerely,

Academic Language Therapy Association
ACT
Advocacy Institute
Alliance for Excellent Education
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Federation of Teachers
American Occupational Therapy Association
Association for Career and Technical Education
Association on Higher Education and Disability
Association for Middle Level Education
CAST
Center for the Collaborative Classroom
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council for Exceptional Children
Early Care and Education Consortium
Easterseals
Education Northwest
Every Child Reading
First Five Year Fund
First Focus Campaign for Children
Grimes Reading Institute
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
HighScope Educational Research Foundation
Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters
International Dyslexia Association
International Literacy Association
Institute for Educational Leadership
Keys to Literacy
Knowledge Alliance
Learning Ally
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Learning First Alliance
Literacy How, Inc.
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of ESEA State Program Administrators (formerly the National Title I Association)
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Families Learning
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council of Teachers of English
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Down Syndrome Society

National Education Association
National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform
National Rural Education Association
National Urban Alliance for Effective Education
National Women's Law Center
National Writing Project
Nemours Children's Health System
Parents as Teachers
Reading Partners
Reading Recovery Council of North America
Scholastic
School Social Work Association of America
TASH
Teach Plus
The Arc of the United States
United Way Worldwide
WestEd
ZERO TO THREE

J. McFarland, P. Stark, and J. Cui, *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 2013* (NCES 2016-117) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2016), <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch> (accessed May 17, 2017).

U.S. Department of Education, NCES, NAEP, 2017 Reading Assessment, https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2017_highlights/ (accessed April 26, 2018).