

March 4, 2015

Representative John Yarmuth
403 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Jared Polis
1433 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Yarmuth and Polis:

We, the undersigned education organizations would like to thank you for your leadership on addressing the literacy needs of all students through the introduction of HR 858, the *Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) Act*.

As you are aware, literacy development is an ongoing process, beginning in early childhood and continuing through elementary and secondary school. Even before the beginning of formal schooling, children from low-income families are less likely than students from higher-income families to recognize letters and understand the relationship between letters and sounds. Without intervention, disparities in educational outcomes persist throughout elementary school and beyond. Unfortunately, 60 percent of eighth- and twelfth-graders read below the proficient level on the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress. One in four students enter ninth grade reading below basic and struggle to graduate because their literacy achievement is alarmingly low. Many of the more than 700,000 students who leave U.S. high schools each year without a diploma have low literacy skills.

Such interventions are necessary because to be successful in the twenty-first century requires skills that an earlier generation never imagined. What students need to know and do to be ready for higher education, work, and civic life is much more demanding than it once was. Creating globally competent graduates requires high level reading and writing skills, and these skills are prerequisites for success in other high-growth fields, including science and technology. The LEARN Act will ensure that students from birth through grade twelve acquire the reading and writing skills necessary to succeed in school and after graduation.

The LEARN Act would create much-needed federal support for comprehensive state and locally led literacy programs to ensure that children from birth to twelfth grade have the reading and writing skills necessary for success in school and beyond. It would authorize \$500 million in fiscal year 2016 to fund state and local school-based literacy programs that span from birth to grade twelve. The grants would provide dedicated funds for early learning, elementary, and adolescent literacy programs.

The LEARN Act would provide funds for high-quality professional development that would prepare teachers to improve literacy instruction; analyze data to improve student learning; use diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to inform instruction; and effectively

implement literacy intervention strategies. Teachers would then be able to provide students, including special education students and English language learners, with excellent instruction in reading and writing.

Thank you again for demonstrating your support for meaningful literacy instruction by introducing this bill.

Sincerely,

1. Academic Language Therapy Association
2. Advocacy Institute
3. Alliance for Excellent Education
4. American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
5. American Association of University Women
6. American Occupational Therapy Association
7. American School Counselor Association
8. Association for Career and Technical Education
9. Association of American Publishers
10. Association for Middle Level Education
11. Association of Teacher Educators
12. Association on Higher Education and Disability
13. Citizen Schools
14. Council for Exceptional Children
15. Early Care and Education Consortium
16. Easter Seals
17. First Five Years Fund
18. First Focus Campaign for Children
19. Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
20. HighScope Educational Research Foundation
21. Institute for Educational Leadership
22. International Dyslexia Association
23. International Literacy Association
24. Keys to Literacy
25. Knowledge Alliance
26. Learning Ally
27. Learning Disabilities Association of America
28. National Adolescent Literacy Coalition
29. National Association for the Education of Young Children
30. National Association of Elementary School Principals
31. National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
32. National Association of School Psychologists
33. National Association of Secondary School Principals
34. National Association of State Boards of Education
35. National Association of State Directors of Special Education
36. National Black Child Development Institute
37. National Center for Family Literacy

38. National Center for Learning Disabilities
39. National Coalition for Literacy
40. National Council of Teachers of English
41. National Down Syndrome Congress
42. National Down Syndrome Society
43. National Education Association
44. National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform
45. National Head Start Association
46. National Title I Association
47. National Urban Alliance for Effective Education
48. National Women's Law Center
49. National Writing Project
50. Nemours Children's Health System
51. Parent-Child Home Program
52. Parents As Teachers
53. Reading Recovery Council of North America
54. Scholastic Inc.
55. School Social Work Association of America
56. TASH
57. Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
58. TESOL International Association
59. The Arc of the U.S.
60. The Association of Educational Publishers
61. The Grimes Reading Institute
62. The Reading Institute
63. United Cerebral Palsy
64. United Way Worldwide
65. WestEd
66. ZERO TO THREE