

Advocates for Literacy

May 15, 2018

Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of Advocates for Literacy, a coalition of over 40 organizations focused on increasing the federal commitment to improve literacy instruction through evidenced-based practices, 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 2019 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we urge you to reject the administration's FY 2019 budget proposal to eliminate the LEARN program and instead continue funding this critically important comprehensive literacy program at \$190 million.

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. In September, eleven states (Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, New Mexico, Ohio, and Oklahoma), the Bureau of Indian Education, and four territories were awarded 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 \$190 million in the FY 2019 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.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Excellent Education
Association on Higher Education and Disability
Association for Middle Level Education
CAST
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Easterseals
Education Northwest
Every Child Reading
First Focus Campaign for Children
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
Literacy How
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 Education Association
National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform
National Rural Education Association
National Urban Alliance for Effective Education
Nemours Children's Health System
National Writing Project
Parents as Teachers
Reading Partners
Reading Recovery Council of North America
Scholastic
School Social Work Association of America
Teach Plus
The Advocacy Institute
The Arc of the United States
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).