Dear Chairmen Harkin and Kingston and Ranking Members Moran and DeLauro:

As you work to finalize the Fiscal Year 2014 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations bill, we urge you to include $164.38 million for the critically important Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Program. This is the funding level included in S.1284, the FY2014 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (LHHS and Ed), passed by the Senate Appropriations Committee on July 11, 2013.

On December 3rd, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) released the latest results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which found that 40 out of the 60 participating countries improved in at least one subject, while the US' performance has remained "fundamentally flat" in all areas. Specifically, American teens scored roughly average in reading and below the international average in mathematics. As we seek to ensure our nation’s workforce remains competitive in a global market, a strong federal commitment to literacy is desperately needed. The SRCL program is the only targeted federal literacy funding for birth through grade 12 that provide teacher professional development and research-based interventions for students who cannot read and write well enough to progress in school through graduation.

In 2010, 48 states received formula funding to create a state literacy team, and in 2011, six states received Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Implementation grants. These states—Georgia, Louisiana, Montana, Nevada, Pennsylvania and Texas—have in turn awarded at least 95 percent of the funds to local school districts with priority going to those serving the greatest number/percentage of disadvantaged students. Each state is working to improve literacy instruction in order to increase literacy proficiency levels of its students to meet college- and career-ready standards, and they are employing
specialized techniques targeting literacy instruction and interventions to meet their students’ needs. Positive results from the first year of SRCL implementation are beginning to emerge. Texas reported a major decline in the number of students identified as having a learning disability. In addition, the St. Bernard Parish Public Schools in Louisiana, where 78 percent of students come from families living in poverty, moved up in rank from 32nd among 70 districts to tenth. Also, St. Bernard Parish teachers are now first in Louisiana in their value-added scores. Ultimately, all states will be able to benefit from the lessons learned.

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. All citizens need advanced literacy skills in order to think critically, as well as to access new information and technologies. Graduating globally competent citizens depends on students using their reading and writing skills to develop important abilities in such areas as math, science, and technology.

This is why we urge you accept the Senate funding level—$164.38 million—in the final FY2014 LHHS and Ed spending bill for this innovative early childhood, elementary, and secondary education initiative to support reading and writing achievement so that more students graduate with the skills needed for success in higher education, work, and civic life. Without this funding, the six implementation sites will not be able to continue their work just when positive results from early SRCL implementation are beginning to emerge.

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

Sincerely,

1. ACT
2. Advocacy Institute
3. Alliance for Excellent Education
4. American Association of University Women
5. American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
6. American Occupational Therapy Association
7. Association for Career and Technical Education
8. Association of American Publishers
9. Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs
10. Association on Higher Education and Disability
11. Association of Middle Level Educators
12. American School Counselor Association
13. Citizen Schools
14. College Board
15. Council for Exceptional Children
16. Easter Seals
17. First Five Year Fund
18. First Focus Campaign for Children
19. Grimes Reading Institute
20. Higher Education Consortium
21. Institute for Educational Leadership
22. International Dyslexia Association
23. International Reading Association
24. Knowledge Alliance
25. Learning Disabilities Association of America
26. Literate Nation
27. National Adolescent Literacy Coalition
28. National Association for the Education of Young Children
29. National Association of Elementary School Principals
30. National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
31. National Association of School Psychologists
32. National Association of Secondary School Principals
33. National Association of State Boards of Education
34. National Association of State Directors of Special Education
35. National Black Child Development Institute
36. National Center for Families Learning
37. National Center for Learning Disabilities
38. National Coalition for Literacy
39. National Council of Teachers of English
40. National Down Syndrome Society
41. National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform
42. National Head Start Association
43. National PTA
44. National School Boards Association
45. National Title I Association
46. National Women's Law Center
47. National Writing Project
48. Nemours
49. PACER Center
50. Parent Child Home Program
51. Reading Partners
52. Reading Recovery Council of North America
53. Scholastic Inc.
54. School Social Work Association of America
55. SEDL
ADVOCA CES FOR LITERACY

56. TASH
57. TESOL International Association
58. The Arc
59. The Association of Educational Publishers
60. United Cerebral Palsy
61. United Way Worldwide
62. Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals Association
63. WestEd
64. Zero to Three