

Advocates for Literacy

June 8, 2017

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 60 organizations focused on increasing the federal commitment to improve literacy instruction through evidenced-based practices, thank you for your past support of the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) program and for its successor, the Literacy for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) program, authorized under Title IIB of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). We urge you to reject the proposal to eliminate funding for LEARN in President Trump's Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 budget 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 assessment scores in low-performing school districts and with disadvantaged students; sustainable professional learning resources provided for teachers and principals; and evidenced-based instruction and intervention practices implemented in alignment with state standards. This fall, the U.S. Department of Education will announce a new cohort of comprehensive literacy grantees which will support States to help local school districts develop comprehensive literacy instruction plans focused on ensuring high-quality instruction and evidence-based intervention strategies for all students from birth through grade twelve.

The 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 36 percent of fourth-graders, 34 percent of eighth-grade students, and 37 percent of twelfth-grade students performed at or above the proficient level in the 2015 Reading assessment of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) – the Nation's Report Card.ⁱ Of the more than 500,000 students who leave U.S. high schools each year without a diploma, many have low literacy skills.ⁱⁱ 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. Advocates for Literacy urge you to provide funding in the FY 2018 Labor,

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Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill for the LEARN program to support reading and writing achievement, so more students graduate from high school with the skills needed for success in higher education, work, and civic life.

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

Sincerely,

1. Academic Language Therapy Association
2. ACT
3. Advocacy Institute
4. Alliance for Excellent Education
5. American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
6. American Federation of Teachers
7. American Occupational Therapy Association
8. Association for Career and Technical Education
9. Association of American Publishers
10. Association on Higher Education and Disability
11. Association for Middle Level Education
12. Council for Exceptional Children
13. Education Northwest
14. Early Care and Education Consortium
15. Easter Seals
16. Every Child Reading
17. First Five Year Fund
18. First Focus Campaign for Children
19. Grimes Reading Institute
20. Higher Education Consortium
21. HighScope Educational Research Foundation
22. Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)
23. Institute for Educational Leadership
24. International Dyslexia Association
25. International Literacy Association
26. Keys to Literacy
27. Knowledge Alliance

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28. Learning Ally
29. Learning Disabilities Association of America
30. Literacy How, Inc
31. National Adolescent Literacy Coalition
32. National Association for the Education of Young Children
33. National Association of Elementary School Principals
34. National Association of School Psychologists
35. National Association of Secondary School Principals
36. National Association of State Boards of Education
37. National Association of State Directors of Special Education
38. National Black Child Development Institute
39. National Center for Families Learning
40. National Center for Learning Disabilities
41. National Coalition for Literacy
42. National Council of Teachers of English
43. National Down Syndrome Congress
44. National Down Syndrome Society
45. National Education Association
46. National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform
47. National Head Start Association
48. National Title I Association
49. National Urban Alliance for Effective Education
50. National Women's Law Center
51. National Writing Project
52. Nemours Children's Health System
53. Parent Child Home Program
54. Parents as Teachers
55. Reading Partners
56. Reading Recovery Council of North America
57. Scholastic Inc.
58. School Social Work Association of America
59. TASH
60. TESOL International Association

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61. The Arc
62. United Cerebral Palsy
63. United Way Worldwide
64. WestEd
65. ZERO TO THREE

ⁱ U.S. Department of Education, NCES, NAEP, 2015 Reading Assessment, <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/> (accessed May 17, 2017).

ⁱⁱ 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).