

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, and Education  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, and Education  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As your Subcommittee considers the Fiscal Year 2019 appropriations bill for the Department of Education, we urge you to maintain the investment in the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) grant program, authorized in the Every Student Succeeds Act. IAL provides competitive awards to school libraries and national not-for-profit organizations, including partnerships that reach families outside of schools, for providing books and childhood literacy activities to children and families in high-need communities. The program also supports parental engagement and focuses on promoting student literacy from birth through high school.

Since its inception in Fiscal Year 2012, over 100 IAL grants have been awarded to nonprofit organizations and school districts across the nation. Some examples of IAL grant activities include:

- Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, NC (WSFCS) implemented technology tools in school libraries to build literacy skills in young children and increase family engagement. The WSFCS program is increasing access to print and digital resources for youth, while developing targeted age and skill appropriate material. The grant is also supporting expanded summer media hours, distribution of material for home libraries, and training for school librarians and teachers. With over 52,000 students, WSFCS is the fifth largest school system in North Carolina.
- Reach Out and Read (ROR) and Save the Children partnered to engage schools, families and communities in creating literacy-rich environments for children in economically disadvantaged rural areas of Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky and South Carolina. ROR leveraged the existing health care infrastructure to promote early literacy and language development among children in 16 counties. In the second year of the grant, 163 medical providers in 42 clinics delivered developmentally appropriate anticipatory guidance at 43,000 well-child visits. Children received new books and parents learned how reading, singing, and rhyming help facilitate healthy brain development and language acquisition.
- Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) launched a two-year research study focused on reducing the “summer learning slide” for children living in poverty. The study

enabled RIF to work with 41 school districts in 16 states, reaching 33,000 second, third, and fourth-grade students and their teachers. Classrooms received STEM-themed book collections, teachers received professional development and literacy resources, and students got books to take home and keep. Fifty-seven percent of the students involved in the study showed gains in reading proficiency over the summer.

Ensuring children's access to books is a critical component of our nation's effort to promote lifelong learning and remains a key aspect of early childhood literacy. For American families living in poverty, access to reading materials is severely limited. Children living in poverty have fewer books in their homes than their peers, and this unfortunate reality hinders their ability to prepare for school and stay on track. We also recognize the importance of effective school library programs in promoting literacy and advancing student achievement.

Congress has taken an important step in supporting the needs of disadvantaged students by providing IAL funding for book distribution, early literacy services, and effective school library programs. We ask that you maintain and build on this investment in the Fiscal Year 2019 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

Jack Reed

Debbie Stabenow

Liz Cheney

Tammy Duckworth

Tom Harkin

Maria Cantwell

Jeanne Shaheen

Shirley

Rahit Menon

Mazie Hirono

Brian Schaefer

Armed Brown

Dick Deub

Tommy Beldi

Richard Blumenthal

Jeffrey A. Mubley

Elizabeth Han

Tricia Smith

Maggie Heran

Dianne Feinstein

Amy Klobuchar

Michelle

Paul Manafort

Donald Trump

Kevin

Kirsten Gillibrand

Robert C. Meyer

Cheri Coon

J. A. B.

Don Wycher

Edward J. Markey

C. M.

Tim Van Vollen

Bob Conti

Bob Stanton

August King

***FY19 Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) funding***  
*Read each pair from the top of the letter from left to right*

Reed  
Stabenow

Peters  
Duckworth

Carper  
Cantwell

Shaheen  
Whitehouse

Menendez  
Hirono

Schatz  
Brown

Durbin  
Baldwin

Blumenthal  
Merkley

Warren  
Smith

Hassan  
Feinstein

Klobuchar  
Heinrich

Manchin  
Harris

Jones  
Gillibrand

Cortez Masto  
Coons

Booker  
Wyden

Markey  
Murphy

Van Hollen  
Cardin

Sanders  
King