

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 27, 2022

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2358-B Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

As your Subcommittee considers Fiscal Year 2023 appropriations, we respectfully request a total of **\$50 million for the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) grant program administered by the Department of Education**, authorized in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). IAL provides competitive awards to school libraries as well as national not-for-profit organizations, including partnerships that reach families outside of local educational agencies (LEAs), to support children and families in high-need, underserved communities. By providing age appropriate books, supporting parental engagement programs, and reinforcing professional development, the IAL program helps to support literacy skills to ensure that children enter school ready to learn and best positioned for success.

Since its inception in Fiscal Year 2012, more than 200 IAL grants have been awarded to national non-profit organizations and school districts across every region of the U.S., delivering critical literacy resources in these communities. In light of interrupted learning this past year due to the pandemic, it is even more urgent to support children's literacy at home and in school. While the challenges of the last year have negatively impacted the reading proficiency of many students, it is particularly acute for minority and low-income students. The IAL program is designed to provide the kind of support children and families need, through library programs that have been a digital literacy lifeline to community-based program and partnerships with primary health care providers to ensure that families can support literacy development at home. Some examples of IAL grant activities include:

Local Education Agencies and School Libraries –

- *Tuscaloosa City Schools in Alabama, a midsize urban city school district serving 10,500 K-12 students in 20 locations, received an IAL collaborative grant to provide a learning environment that is racially, ethnically, culturally, disability status and linguistically responsive. The grant will allow the district and its school librarians to implement the Alabama Literacy Act to improve reading proficiency of public-school kindergarten through grade 3 students. The district will be able to provide early literacy services and distribute high-quality books on a regular basis to children from low-income communities.*

National Non-Profit Organizations –

- Reading is Fundamental is a partner on an IAL five-year Grant with Dellingham City School District in Alaska. This grant will be used to fund a project that the district calls "LINKED," or Literacy

Innovation for Neighborhood Kids' Education Development. The LINKED project will allow the district to expand upon its highest academic priority in education, by engaging with parents, guardians and the community, to dramatically increase district and city library services for students. Some of those activities include a monthly book distribution service, family reading nights, an after school digital literacy program and incentivized reading programs like the "Million Word Club" and the "Wolvereading Challenge." Reading Is Fundamental is a key partner in the initiative providing professional development to educators to drive student impact.


- Reach Out and Read (ROR), a pediatric primary care model, endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, that embeds early literacy promotion in well-child check-ups, partnered with Save the Children, to engage schools and families of very young children in creating literacy-rich environments for more than 40,000 children in rural areas of Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky and South Carolina. Several school districts in Texas (Southwest, Charlotte, Cuero, Brownsville ISDs) and Oklahoma (Idabel) have incorporated the Reach Out and Read model in recent IAL projects. Pediatric primary care providers are able to reach children during the earliest years of life, ensuring that parents learn how sharing books together helps facilitate healthy brain development and language acquisition, starting at birth.

The National Center for Education Statistics 2019 reading assessment illustrates the urgent need for the early literacy skills development offered by school librarians. The assessment showed that 35 percent of fourth grade students, 34 percent of eighth grade students, and 37 percent of 12th grade students performed at or above proficient for literacy.

Access to high-quality literacy programming and resources remains a critical component of childhood literacy. For American families living in poverty, the lack of access to quality reading materials and adequate learning facilities is prohibitive, fostering chronic disadvantages for already underserved youth. Without critical literacy support, students often fall behind in school and struggle to achieve their full potential.

Congress has taken an important step in supporting the needs of underserved students by providing IAL funding for book distribution, early literacy services, and effective school library programs. We ask you to provide \$50 million in funding for this important investment in the Fiscal Year 2023 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

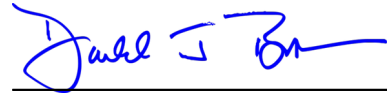
Sincerely,


Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress


Peter Meijer M.C.
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



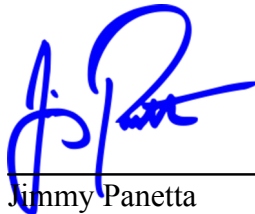
Don Bacon
Member of Congress



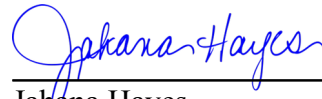
Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



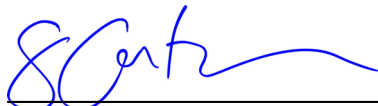
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress



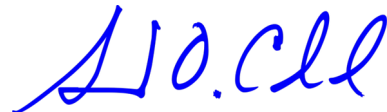
Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress



Sean Casten
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



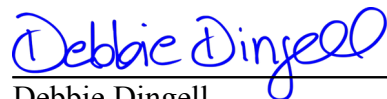
Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress



Paul Tonko
Member of Congress



Gregorio Kilili Camacho
Sablan
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



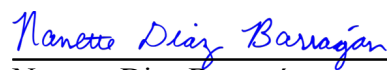
Conor Lamb
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



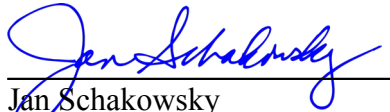
Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

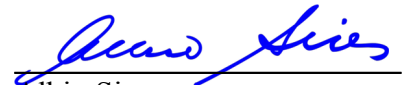


Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

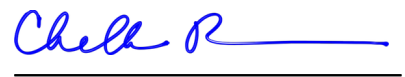


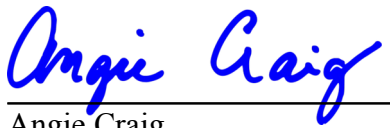
Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

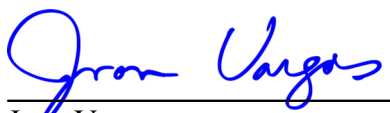

Albio Sires
Member of Congress



Ron Kind
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Angie Craig
Member of Congress


Joe Courtney
Member of Congress


Juan Vargas
Member of Congress


Bill Foster
Member of Congress


Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress


Frank J. Mrvan
Member of Congress



Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



John Yarmuth
Member of Congress



Antonio Delgado
Member of Congress



Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress



Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress



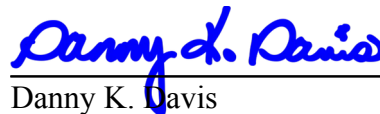
Karen Bass
Member of Congress



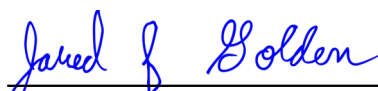
Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Jared Golden
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



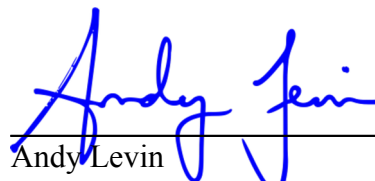
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Darin LaHood
Member of Congress



Andy Levin
Member of Congress



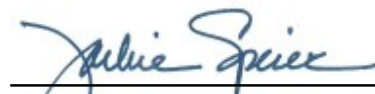
Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress



Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress



Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Colin Z. Allred
Member of Congress



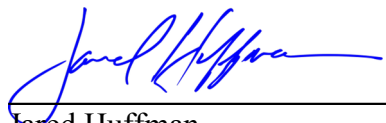
Arna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



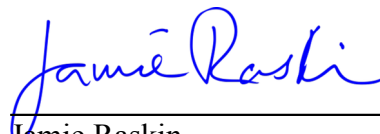
Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



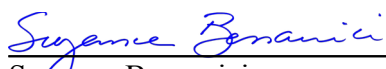
Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



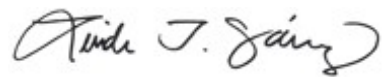
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



John Katko
Member of Congress



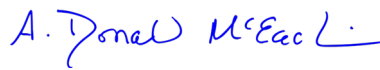
Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress



A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress



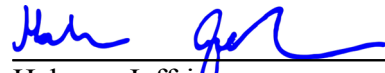
Adam Smith
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Hakeem Jeffries
Member of Congress



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



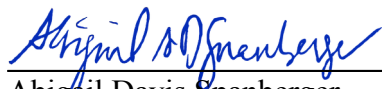
Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Jason Crow
Member of Congress



Abigail Davis Spanberger
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress