



December 11, 2023

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chair
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee

Dear Chair Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy,

The [Alliance for Learning Innovation \(ALI\)](#) commends your bipartisan efforts to reauthorize the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA) with the *Advancing Researching in Education Act of 2023 (AREA)*. As noted in *The Future of Education Research at IES* report, "... the landscape of public education in the United States has changed since IES was founded in 2002, resulting in a different constellation of priorities and political realities than existed at the time IES was founded. As the 20th anniversary of ESRA approaches, it is time to consider ways that IES can improve its current research activities and plan for future research and training in the education sciences."¹ The *Advancing Research in Education Act* is an essential step in that direction of improving an education research and development (R&D) ecosystem to be more responsive to the needs of learners and translating evidence into actionable information to improve teaching and learning.

As a coalition of education nonprofits, philanthropy, and the private sector advocating for better education R&D infrastructure, ALI supports AREA's thoughtful approach to modernizing data infrastructure through the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) program and its effort to make R&D more responsive to and practical for practitioners and communities, such as through State Capacity R&D grants. ALI also appreciates its advocacy for diversifying the education researcher pipeline, increasing transparency around IES' funded work, authorizing expedited surveys like the School Pulse Panel, and allowing the Director to appoint rotators, among other changes. These changes, along with the significantly increased engagement of practitioners, state and local school leaders, are important improvements to the legislation. The Committee should also be commended for updates to the original proposal to define and apply "evidence."

¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2022. *The Future of Education Research at IES: Advancing an Equity-Oriented Science*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26428>.

ALI remains committed, however, to addressing the continued gap around the “development” component of ed R&D that the legislation does not address. Congress showed its support for “development” when it directed the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to “use a portion of its fiscal year 2023 appropriation to support a new funding opportunity for quick turnaround, high-reward scalable solutions intended to significantly improve outcomes for students, which may include suggested research activities described in [House Report 117-403](#).” The House Report describes a National Center for Advanced Development in Education (NCADE); the current pilot underway is an important down payment on education benefiting from the informed-risk, high-reward R&D conducted by other Federal agencies. The President’s FY 2024 budget request also included this effort. With gaps in education outcomes continuing to grow, the growing crisis of mental health and chronic absenteeism, and the paradigm-shifting promise AI may hold for teaching and learning, the federal government cannot abdicate its role in supporting advanced education research and development during such a critical time.

Despite this gap, ALI looks forward to the approval of AREA by the Committee. We are committed to improving the legislation as it advances before the Senate.

If you have questions, please contact Otto Katt (otto@lewis-burke.com) or Sara Schapiro (sschapiro@fas.org).

Sincerely,
The Alliance for Learning Innovation