

September 17, 2026

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Thom Tillis
113 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Senators Bennet, Tillis, and Van Hollen,

We, the undersigned, write in support of the New Essential Education Discoveries (NEED) Act. This legislation will strengthen education research and development (R&D) to improve student learning and sharpen the United States' competitive edge in an increasingly technology-rich world. At a time when academic proficiency is on the decline and artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies are on the rise, the NEED Act's investment in education research and innovation is more important than ever. The future of American education must be shaped by data, evidence of what works, and bold new approaches harnessing technological advances so that students are prepared to thrive in work and life.

The NEED Act will establish a National Center for Advanced Development in Education (NCADE) at the Institute of Education Sciences. NCADE is modeled after the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), a renowned R&D incubator that has produced groundbreaking innovations like the internet and GPS. While many sectors, like health and agriculture, have DARPA-inspired advanced R&D agencies, education does not. Recognizing that education is in need of transformative, evidenced-based approaches and tools, NCADE will have the hiring flexibility to attract creative and nimble project managers to lead multidisciplinary teams engaged in informed-risk, high-reward R&D projects. Specifically, NCADE will fund teams to develop cutting-edge practices, breakthrough technologies, and innovations in the responsible use of AI to enhance teaching and learning.

Given that data infrastructure is the backbone of effective R&D, The NEED Act will also expand and upgrade the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) program. This will help states better track students' progress through K-12 and into the workforce, integrate data across multiple domains, ensure the privacy of students' education records, and generate high-quality data in actionable formats. The modernization of SLDS will ensure that state data systems can be an effective tool to inform use-driven and translational research, resulting in meaningful and measurable benefits in school districts and postsecondary institutions.

Thank you for your leadership in education research and innovation. We look forward to working with you to advance the NEED Act and ensure U.S. students receive the high-quality education they deserve.

Sincerely,

AACTE (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education)
Accelerate - The National Collaborative for Accelerated Learning

AERDF (Advanced Education Research and Development Fund)
All4Ed
Alliance for Learning Innovation
America Forward
American Educational Research Association
American Psychological Association Services
Applied Learning Insights
Beyond100K
Bipartisan Policy Center
Buck Institute Education/PBLWorks
CAST
Committee for Children
Common Cents Education Consulting
Common Sense Media
Consortium for State Education Support
Dan Lips, Senior Fellow, Foundation for American Innovation
Data Quality Campaign
Digital Promise Global
EDGE Partners
EdTrust
Education Knowledge Broker Network
Education Reform Now Advocacy
Education Reimagined
Educators for Excellence
EdVenture Lab
ExcelinEd in Action
Federation of American Scientists
Foundation for Deeper Learning
FullScale
High Tech High Graduate School of Education
InnovateEDU
Institute for Educational Leadership
jeffweldLLC
John Bailey, Former White House Domestic Policy Advisor
KB Stack Consulting, LLC
Knowledge Alliance
Kristin Gagnier, Senior Research Scientist, AnLar
Kumar Garg, Renaissance Philanthropy
Laura Holian, Research Director, AnLar
Learner-Centered Collaborative
LearnerStudio
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Learning Heroes
LearningForge LLC

Mark Schneider, Former Director IES (2018-2024)
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council on Teacher Quality
National Girls Collaborative
National Parents Union
National School Boards Association
New Classrooms
New Leaders
reDesign
Reinvention Lab at Teach For America
Results for America
Robert Bellafiore, Managing Director for External Relations, Foundation for American Innovation
SERP Institute
SETDA
SRI
Teach For America
Teach Plus
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
The Learning Agency
The Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD)
The Study Group
The Tech Interactive
Thomas B. Fordham Institute
Threadwell Solutions
TNTP
Transcend
University of Oregon
Zarek Drozda, Executive Director, Data Science 4 Everyone