The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Health, Education, Labor, and Pension Committee  
648 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

As you negotiate a conference agreement to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we urge you to maintain the Literacy and Arts Education program included in Title V, Part H, of the Every Child Achieves Act. These provisions support both literacy programs serving children in need and arts education for disadvantaged students and students with disabilities.

Since Fiscal Year 2012, on a bipartisan basis, Congress has funded the Innovative Approaches to Literacy program that awards competitive awards to school libraries and national not-for-profit organizations, including partnerships that reach families outside of local educational agencies, 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. We thank you for recognizing that this investment is paying off by approving the Literacy and Arts Education program on a voice vote during the HELP Committee’s consideration of the Every Child Achieves Act.

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 that multiple research studies have shown the positive impact of effective school library programs in promoting literacy and advancing student achievement. For these reasons, it is critical that the final Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization bill includes the Senate Literacy and Arts Education provisions.

We look forward to continuing to work with you on this critical matter and thank you for your leadership in producing a strong, bipartisan bill in the Senate.

Sincerely,

Jack Reed  
United States Senator

Charles E. Grassley  
United States Senator