March 15, 2012

The Honorable Denny Rehberg
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, and Education
House Appropriations Committee
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, and Education
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rehberg and Ranking Member DeLauro,

As your Subcommittee prepares to consider the Fiscal Year 2013 appropriations bill for the Department of Education, we urge you to support language to set aside a percentage of funds under the Fund for the Improvement of Education for competitive awards to national not-for-profit organizations and school libraries for providing books and childhood literacy activities to children and families living in high need communities.

The importance of this type of grant program was recognized during the FY12 appropriations process, and the final conference report (H.R. 2055) included $28.6 million for this essential childhood literacy initiative.

Ensuring children’s access to books is critical in promoting life-long learning and remains a key component of early childhood literacy. For American families living in poverty, access to reading materials is severely limited. Two-thirds of America’s children living in poverty have no books at home, and this unfortunate and difficult reality hinders their ability to prepare for school. 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 funding for book distribution, early literacy services, and effective school library programs. We ask that you maintain this investment by providing at least level funding in the FY13 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

Eddie Bernice Johnson
Don Young
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress
Member of Congress
Member of Congress

Rush Holt
Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress
Member of Congress
Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Jerry McNerney
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Nick J. Rahall, II
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Pete Stark
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Betty Sutton
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Stephen F. Lynch
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Emanuel Cummings
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Howard L. Berman
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Frank Pallone, Jr.
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Tammy Baldwin
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Michael F. Doyle
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Ron Kind
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Barney Frank
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Ben Ray Luján
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G. K. Butterfield
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Judy Biggert
Member of Congress