The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

March 29, 2012

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby:

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 Consolidated Appropriations Act included funding under the Fund for the Improvement of Education to support disadvantaged children’s access to books, early literacy services, and effective school library programs through national competitive grants. We ask that you maintain this investment in the FY13 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

Literacy remains at the core of academic achievement for all children, and is a strong indicator for long-term success and opportunity. Exposure to books is an essential part of early childhood literacy and preparation for school. Yet, two-thirds of America’s children living in poverty have no books at home, and the number of families living in poverty is on the rise. Additionally, we know that access to effective school library programs, staffed by trained school librarians, has a positive impact on student achievement, and offers students a way to develop and hone skills, including how to find and use information, that are critical for meeting college and career-ready standards.

By providing funding for book distribution, early literacy services, and effective school library programs, the Congress made an important statement about the importance of ensuring that disadvantaged students have access to these critical tools for success in school and in life. We ask that you continue to support this effort by including at least level funding for these activities in the FY13 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued support for improving literacy.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]