

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

March 13, 2020

Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, HHS, Education  
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Tom Cole  
House Appropriation Subcommittee on  
Labor, HHS, Education  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member:

As your Subcommittee considers Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations, we respectfully request a total of \$30 million for the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) grant program administered by the Department of Education, authorized in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). IAL provides competitive awards to school libraries as well as national not-for-profit organizations, including partnerships that reach families outside of local education agencies (LEAs), to support children and families in high-need, underserved communities. By providing age-appropriate books, supporting parental engagement programs, and reinforcing professional development, the IAL program helps to support literacy skills to ensure that children enter school ready to learn and best positioned for success.

Since its inception in Fiscal Year 2012, 166 IAL grants have been awarded to national non-profit organizations and school districts across every region of the US. Some examples of IAL grant activities include:

*Local Education Agencies and School Libraries-*

- *Three school districts in Alaska, largely rural, received IAL grants in the 2018 grant cycle. The Bering Strait School District grant targets children aged 1 – 4 years old through book distribution, educator training and parent/child literacy workshops. Their library is also distributing education kits to students in grades K – 8. Hydaburg City School District is using its grant to modernize and expand its library book, resource (including technology), and program offerings. Yukon-Koyukuk School District received a grant to create programs for motivating young readers, modernizing its library collection, and training librarians and educators in literacy skills support.*

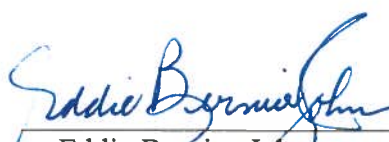
*National Non-Profit Organizations-*

- Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) used IAL funds to support 33,000 students across 31 school districts with books and literacy resources to explore a model that drives summer reading outcomes by supporting students, teachers and families. Fifty-seven percent of the students involved in the study showed gains in reading proficiency over the summer. RIF was also part of an IAL project with the Kentucky Education Development Corporation to support participating schools through access to books, resources and training resulting in improved student performance in literacy
- Reach Out and Read (ROR) and Save the Children partnered to engage schools, families and the pediatric primary care providers in creating literacy-rich environments for more than 40,000 children in rural areas of Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky and South Carolina. Several school districts in Texas (Southwest, Charlotte, Cuero, Brownsville ISDs) and Oklahoma (Idabel) have incorporated the Reach Out and Read model in recent IAL projects to integrate pediatric providers in literacy promotion activities. By partnering with the healthcare professionals, communities are able to reach children during the earliest years of life, ensuring that parents learn how reading, singing and rhyming help facilitate healthy brain development and language acquisition, starting at birth.

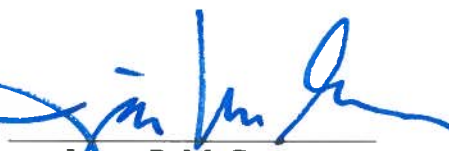
Access to high-quality literacy programming and resources remains a critical component of childhood literacy. For American families living in poverty and limited to the services of high-need local educational authorities, lack of access to quality reading materials and adequate learning facilities is prohibitive, fostering chronic disadvantages for already underserved youth. Without critical literacy support, students often fall behind in school and struggle to thrive in the workforce.

Congress has taken an important step in supporting the needs of disadvantaged students by providing IAL funding for book distribution, early literacy services and effective school library programs. We ask you to increase funding for this important investment in the Fiscal Year 2021 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

  
 Eddie Bernice Johnson  
 Member of Congress

  
 Don Young  
 Member of Congress

  
 James P. McGovern  
 Member of Congress

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**List of Signatories – Page 1**

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