January 22, 2015

The Hon. Lamar Alexander
Chairman, HELP Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Patty Murray
Ranking Member, HELP Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. John Kline
Chair, Education & Workforce Committee

U.S House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Robert Scott
Ranking Member, Education & Workforce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Alexander, Senator Murray, Representative Kline, and Representative Scott,

We are writing to urge you to include Investing in Innovation (i3), an evidence-based innovation fund, in your proposals to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Specifically, we recommend you authorize $165 million for an i3 fund that would provide competitive grants using a tiered-evidence framework. This fund would support state and local entities in replicating education programs that have high levels of effectiveness and to develop and test promising new ideas. Additionally, the language should specify that up to 5 percent of the i3 funds may be used for technical assistance and evaluation activities, and that the Secretary may renew a grant for additional one year periods if the grantee is meeting its performance targets, up to a total award period of 6 years.

The tiered-evidence approach has two breakthrough design principles: First, it provides more money to programs with higher levels of evidence. Second, it requires evaluations so that programs continue to improve. By prioritizing approaches proven to work, an evidence-based innovation fund like i3 would likely achieve higher average levels of impact. And, the requirement to evaluate results will provide a basis to improve programs across the spectrum of effectiveness.

We believe that taking these steps will help support states, districts, educators, families, and communities as they prepare each young person for success in college, careers, and citizenship. We thank you in advance for considering these recommendations, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss them further.

Sincerely,

Organizations in alphabetical order

Achievement Network
Alliance College-Ready Public Schools
AdvancED
America Forward
AppleTree Institute for Education Innovation
Atlantic Research Partners
Center for Research and Reform in Education, Johns Hopkins University
Citizen Schools

City Year
Curry School of Education, University of Virginia
Democrats for Education Reform
EDC
Education Analytics
Education Connection
Education Northwest
Erikson Institute
FHI360
Forum for Youth Investment
Green Dot Public Schools
IDEA Public Schools
KIPP
Knowledge Alliance
Marzano Research
McREL International
MinnCAN: The Minnesota Campaign for Achievement Now
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
National Writing Project
New Classrooms Innovation Partners for Learning
New Leaders
New Teacher Center
NWEA
Parents as Teachers
Results For America
RMC Research Corporation
Search-Institute
SRI International
Success For All Foundation
Talent Development Secondary
Teach For America
Teach Plus
TNTP
Turnaround for Children
University of Alaska
Urban Teacher Residency United
WestEd