

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 26, 2025

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, and Related
Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Capito and Ranking Member Baldwin:

As the Subcommittee considers Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations, we respectfully request a total of \$50 million for the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) grant program administered by the Department of Education. IAL provides competitive awards to school libraries as well as national not-for-profit organizations, including partnerships that reach families outside of local educational agencies (LEAs), to support children and families in high-need, underserved communities.

Since its inception in Fiscal Year 2012, more than 200 IAL grants have been awarded to national non-profit organizations and school districts across every region of the U.S., delivering critical literacy resources in these 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 succeed.

The 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results underscore the urgent need for the literacy skills development offered by school librarians and literacy partnerships. The Assessment [results](#) showed continued declines in both fourth and eighth grades, with the scores of students at the 10th and 25th percentiles, which is lower than the scores from the first NAEP reading assessment in 1992.

Access to high-quality literacy programming and resources remains a critical component of childhood literacy development. For American families living in poverty, the lack of access to quality reading materials and adequate learning facilities fosters chronic disadvantages for already underserved youth. Without critical literacy support, students often fall behind in school and struggle to achieve their full potential.

Congress has taken an important step in supporting the needs of underserved students by providing IAL funding for book distribution, early literacy services, and effective school library programs. We ask you to provide \$50 million in funding for this important investment in the Fiscal Year 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

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