

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 30, 2024

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C.
20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C.
20515

Dear Chair Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As your Subcommittee considers Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations, we respectfully request a total of \$50 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 educational 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, 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. Some examples of IAL grant activities include:

Local Education Agencies and School Libraries

- Coosa County Schools (AL) received an IAL grant for its project “Literacy Everywhere!” The grant supports collaboration with school libraries to help children and youth improve their literacy skills in – and out – of school. The grant will help build school, classroom and home libraries that are racially, ethnically, culturally, disability status, and linguistically responsive. The grant will run for five years but

has been designed to be sustainable for years after, in part by supporting literacy training and confidence of PreK-12 staff. Activities for students, staff and families are encouraged by this necessary funding.

National Non-Profit Organizations

- Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) is the recipient of a five-year award to develop, implement and study a model to boost early childhood educational outcomes through a play-based approach to literacy. RIF's project will enhance emergent reading skills through increased access to books and play-based literacy programming for PreK-3 and 4 students across the District of Columbia. The initiative plans to increase access to literacy tools and resources for students and their families through the distribution of books and accompanying print and digital family literacy content and student engagement materials, while engaging and increasing the capacity of both librarians and early education teachers. The result: increased emergent literacy skills in the areas of vocabulary and language development, concepts about print, and phonological awareness for young readers, and ultimately, increased reading achievement by 3rd grade.
- Reach Out and Read is a national nonprofit that utilizes children's books and guidance promoting the value of shared reading to support parents and caregivers in strengthening healthy relationships with their infants and young children, birth through 5 years old. In deep partnership with a network of medical clinicians trained in the Reach Out and Read evidence-backed model, the program leverages the near-universal reach of the pediatric well-child visit to foster early literacy and establish a love of reading, preparing children for school. The only national pediatric literacy model endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Reach Out and Read's national network of 36,000 medical providers reaches 4.4 million young children in every state across the country.

The 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress results underscore the urgent need for the literacy skills development offered by school librarians and literacy partnerships. The Assessment results showed troubling declines with fourth graders posting the lowest scores since 2005 and eighth graders posting the lowest scores since 1998.

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 is prohibitive, fostering 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 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

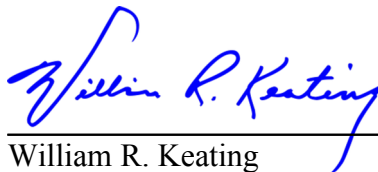
Sincerely,



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Don Bacon
Member of Congress



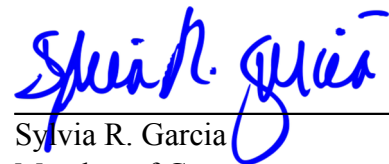
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Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Sylvia R. Garcia
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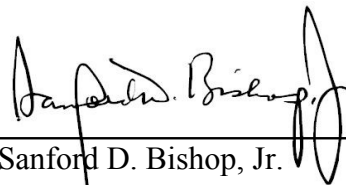
Lizzie Fletcher
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Chellie Pingree
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Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress



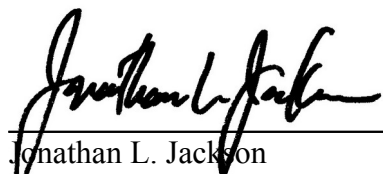
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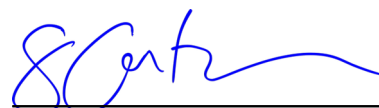
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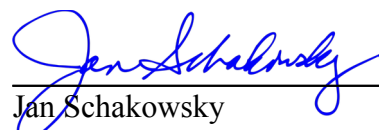
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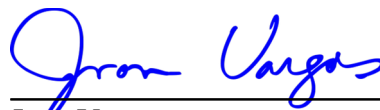
Dina Titus
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John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress



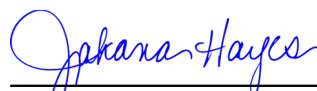
Steven Horsford
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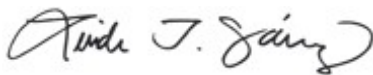
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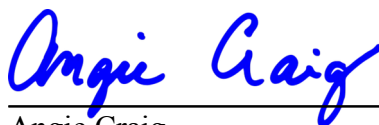
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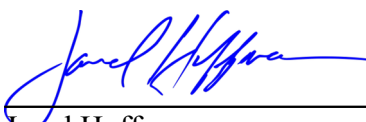
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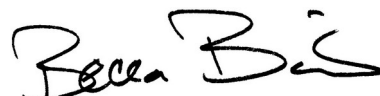
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Frank J. Mrvan
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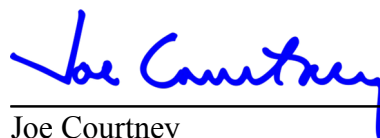
Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



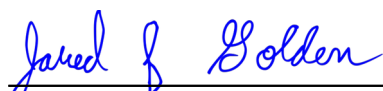
Becca Balint
Member of Congress



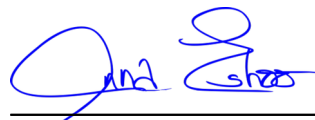
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Joe Courtney
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Anna G. Eshoo
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Suzan K. DelBene
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Josh Gottheimer
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Elissa Slotkin
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