

The Honorable Lamar Smith, Chairman
The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Ranking Member
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Larry Bucshon, Chairman
The Honorable Dan Lipinski, Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Research and Technology
B374 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

April 4, 2014

Dear Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Johnson, Chairman Bucshon, and Ranking Member Lipinski,

The LEARN Coalition (The Learning and Education Academic Research Network), a coalition of Deans of leading research colleges of education, believes that research supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF) is critical to our efforts to improve educational outcomes in the STEM fields. We believe that such research is vital to our nation's competitive future and we welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee to craft a reauthorization bill that reflects these national priorities.

Unfortunately, we are troubled by certain provisions in the FIRST Act (H.R. 4186) that was recently marked up by the Subcommittee on Research and Technology. While we are pleased that there is movement toward a reauthorization of NSF and a recognition of the critical role the Foundation plays, we write to express three concerns: (1) The overall authorization level for NSF does not establish a sufficient goal for critical research funding; (2) The authorization length is insufficient given the nature of research and need for predictability; and (3) the inclusion of specific authorization levels for individual directorates clearly treats certain scientific disciplines differently.

The LEARN Coalition strongly recommends more robust authorization levels for NSF which would send a clear message that Congress believes the research done at NSF is important. This bill will set the tone for future funding discussions for NSF, and the authorization level should underscore the importance of robust support for the nation's scientific enterprise. A strong message from Congress on the importance of this funding would help colleges of education and other grantees to attract other resources for these research projects, such as state, private or philanthropic resources, which would allow grantees to leverage NSF funds for greater results and impact of research projects. The authorization level set in the FIRST Act does not denote this importance nor allow for future growth.

We are concerned that a two-year authorization period will not provide sufficient continuity for research programs at NSF and other agencies. A longer authorization period will allow NSF to better plan for and allocate research funds. In addition, the colleges of education we represent,

as well as other grantees, would have a better sense of the long-term priorities that Congress and NSF have for research issues in these areas, which would then allow grantees to keep their research efforts focused around these longer-term goals. We urge the Committee to extend the authorization period well beyond FY 2015.

Finally, as leaders in the field of education research, we know that NSF provides critical support to advance research on learning in STEM subjects. Previous reauthorizations have created a strong foundation for research at NSF and other federal agencies, and have indicated Congress' support for basic research across all scientific disciplines, including education research. We urge the Committee to continue that support in this reauthorization. Setting authorization levels for individual directorates within NSF will hamper NSF's flexibility and ability to respond to the changing research landscape and work in partnership with colleges of education and others in the research field to identify critical priorities in education research.

NSF reauthorization bills have enjoyed bipartisan support in the past and we hope the same can be achieved this year. We thank you for your work on this important reauthorization legislation and hope that the LEARN Coalition can work with the Committee on a bipartisan basis as the process moves forward.

Sincerely,
Co-chairs of the LEARN Coalition:

Dean Gerardo M. Gonzalez
Indiana University, School of Education

Dean Donald E. Heller
Michigan State University, College of Education

Dean Donna L. Wiseman
University of Maryland, College of Education