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April 1, 2014

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable George Miller
Senior Democrat
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Kline and Senior Democrat Miller:

Knowledge Alliance—a non-profit, non-partisan organization composed of leading education organizations involved in high-quality education research, technical assistance, and evaluation—strongly supports the Committee’s introduction of a bipartisan bill to reauthorize the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA). This bill reauthorizes the programs and activities at the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), which provides the evidence base for our educational system.

We are pleased the bill maintains the structure and independence of IES and recognizes the important role of Regional Education Laboratories (RELs) and Comprehensive Centers (CCs) in getting evidence into practice. Knowledge Alliance is also supportive of measures included in the bill to improve the timeliness, relevance and usability of education research, technical assistance and evaluation so that it is focused on addressing the needs of our schools and students.

The reauthorization bill keeps the core structure of IES intact so that it can continue its work as a driver and disseminator of high-quality education research. Knowledge Alliance is pleased that the bill preserves the autonomy of IES from the U.S. Department of Education to ensure that IES’ research and evaluation processes remain unbiased.

The bill also increases the focus on equity so that research, evaluation and technical assistance activities are focused on education issues that have an impact on our most disadvantaged students, and so that the districts and schools serving those students have the tools they need to succeed.

Knowledge Alliance is also pleased that the bill seeks to improve research, technical assistance and evaluation so that states, districts and schools have timely and continuous access to the latest findings on what works to improve student achievement. The provisions in the bill will ensure that there is a greater chance that education research will be accessible and used by educators.

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The ESRA reauthorization bill also takes steps toward increasing the inclusion of education stakeholders in setting research priorities by requiring their participation on various advisory boards for research and technical assistance projects. Knowledge Alliance is pleased that the bill acknowledges the importance of including education stakeholders, as they are the best source for identifying the most pressing problems facing educators today.

Finally, Knowledge Alliance thanks the Committee for recognizing the value of the RELs and CCs by preserving and strengthening them. RELs and CCs are a crucial part of the research and technical assistance system and, with this bill, can continue to help educators determine the best evidence-based practices that will fit the needs of their schools, districts and states, and how best to implement those practices to have the highest level of success.

We thank you for taking this strong first step toward a reauthorization of ESRA. We hope to work with the Committee on a bipartisan basis as the reauthorization process moves forward to ensure that research and evidence-based practices are developed, disseminated and used effectively to improve teaching and learning.

Sincerely,

Michele McLaughlin
President