



March 27, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As your Subcommittee considers Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations, we urge you to increase funding for the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) grant program administered by the Department of Education. In the most recent competition for IAL there were 145 applications reviewed but funding only allowed for 40 to be funded. With a new completion planned for Fiscal Year 2021, an increase would ensure that more communities would benefit from IAL awards to school libraries as well as national not-for-profit organizations that support literacy outside of school. By providing age-appropriate books, supporting parental engagement programs, and reinforcing professional development, the IAL program helps strengthen literacy skills to ensure that children enter school ready to learn and continue to be best positioned for success.

Since its inception in Fiscal Year 2012, 166 IAL grants have been awarded to national non-profit organizations and school districts across every region of the US. Some examples of IAL grant activities include:

Local Education Agencies/School Libraries-

- Three largely rural school districts in Alaska were awarded IAL grants in the 2018 grant cycle. The Bering Strait School District grant targets children between the ages of one to four through book distribution, educator training, and parent/child literacy workshops. Its library is also distributing education kits to students in grades K-8. Hydaburg City School District is using its grant to modernize and expand its library books, resources (including technology), and program offerings. Yukon-Koyukuk School District received a grant to create programs for motivating young readers, modernizing its library collection, and training librarians and educators in literacy skills support.

National Non-Profit Organizations-

- With a 2016 grant, Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) partnered with the Kentucky

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