

April 19, 2023

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chair
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee

Dear Chair Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on policies the Committee should consider during the reauthorization of the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA).

The STEM Education Coalition is an alliance of education, business, and professional organizations nationwide that works to inform federal, state, and local decision makers about the critical role that science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education plays in enabling American competitiveness in the global economy.

A key aspect of elevating the STEM subjects as a national priority is developing a better understanding about which students, teachers, schools and communities have access and opportunity to have high-quality STEM learning opportunities, both in and outside their classrooms. The Institute for Education Sciences (IES) at the Department of Education can play an important role in helping both policymakers and education leaders at the state and local level have greater insights into how best to employ their limited resources to benefit the greatest number of students in STEM subjects and experiences. We are pleased to offer several recommendations for ESRA that could advance this goal.

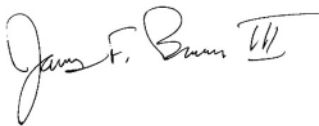
- Develop and publicize an IES-funded national state-by-state scorecard for key STEM education metrics. This could be based on the numerous recommendations of the National Academies Board on Science Education regarding key metrics to measure success and achievement in the STEM subjects that extend well beyond test scores and could also include input from the STEM community on a regular basis to adjust to

changing trends. Having a national scorecard that aggregates all of the key metrics would be extremely beneficial to federal and state efforts to effectively scale up STEM-related interventions and bring best practices in STEM education to more schools, teachers, and students that lack access and opportunity.

- Increase the frequency and comprehensiveness of the NAEP science assessment to match math and reading. Aligning the frequency of science assessment with the math and reading assessments will improve our ability to understand how student science performance has changed over time and will also increase the importance of science education.
- Strengthen the independence and autonomy of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Reinstating the NCES Commissioner as a Senate confirmed position. Senate oversight of the NCES commissioner appointment helps ensure a qualified leader and objective education statistics for our nation. Further, presidential appointment and Senate confirmation provides the commissioner with more authority to advocate for the independence and relevance of NCES data.
- Include provisions to increase transparency for peer reviewers at IES. Currently there is no publicly available means to track the demographic or institutional data of peer reviewers. IES should collect information on the racial, ethnic, gender, disciplinary and institutional backgrounds of peer reviewers as recommended in the National Academies 2022 consensus study [The Future of education Research at IES: Advancing an Equity-Oriented Science report](#).
- Ensure that funding authorization levels reflect the expanding need for evidence-based data on the science of teaching and learning and developing and advancing innovative education research.

As the time worn aphorism goes: Measure twice and cut once. Our Coalition strongly believes that having a world class education system in STEM subjects requires that we collect, analyze and share all of the best on outcomes, equality of opportunity, and opportunities for success in these critical fields. We look forward to the opportunity work with you and your staff as this legislation advances.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James F. Brown III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent "J" and "B".

James Brown
Executive Director