

March 24, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Senate Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
House Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Senate Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

Dear Senator Baldwin, Senator Capito, Representative Aderholt, and Representative DeLauro:

As the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee develops the U.S. Department of Education's fiscal year (FY) 2024 budget, we encourage you to provide \$405,000,000 for the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) program, which provides grants that support evidence-based, field-initiated innovations that address the academic, social, and emotional needs of students.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is critical for the academic and holistic success of all students, and it is imperative in light of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on students' academic achievement, particularly low-income students who are likely to attend schools with fewer resources, less experienced teachers, and less access to advanced coursework. When students are engaged in supportive learning environments and developmentally appropriate opportunities to develop skills in self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, they are more likely to experience academic success, school and civic engagement, health and wellness, and fulfilling careers.¹ A landmark 2011 meta-analysis found that SEL increased students' academic performance by 11 percentile points, compared to students who did not participate in SEL.² In addition, according to a 2023 meta-analysis that reviewed more than 400 studies, students participating in SEL at schools that had higher "school functioning," including grades, test scores, attendance, homework completion, and engagement saw decreases in aggression and bullying, anxiety, stress, depression, suicidality; and felt safer at schools reporting higher levels of inclusion,

¹ "What Is the CASEL Framework?" *CASEL*, 3 Aug. 2022, <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/>.

² Durlak, Joseph A., et al. "The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions." *Child Development*, vol. 82, no. 1, 2011, pp. 405-432., <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x>.

connectedness and healthy relationships.³ Further, cost-benefit research shows that for every dollar spent on SEL, on average, there is an \$11 return on investment.⁴

Congress can support the academic, social, and emotional learning of our nation’s students through the EIR program, which was established under section 4611 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended through the Every Student Succeeds Act. The EIR Program provides funding to support and validate proposed strategies for addressing the most persistent educational challenges to student success, especially the challenges facing our nation’s highest need and most underserved students. In the bipartisan FY2023 omnibus appropriations package, the joint explanatory statement provided \$87,000,000 for SEL grants within the EIR program.

The EIR program has made investments in SEL to improve student achievement and meet the social and emotional needs of students and teachers. For example, the EIR program provides support to the Association for Alaskan School Boards for the “Culturally Responsive and Embedded Social and Emotional Learning” program, which adapted the CASEL SEL framework for rural, indigenous students in 30 schools, reaching 1,800 K-12 students.⁵ The EIR program also funds the “Using and Leveraging Technology to Reinvent Accessibility: Minecraft Mentor Edition” project in Duval County Public Schools in Florida, to provide professional development and support for educators and improve SEL skills for students in grades K-5 with a focus on students with disabilities.⁶ Further, the EIR program supports Iredell-Statesville Schools in North Carolina to implement RIPPLE: “Reducing Disparities and Implementing strategies to Promote Proactive Learning Environments.”⁷ RIPPLE focuses on layering academic and social and emotional learning supports in combination with trauma-informed care to serve 10,729 high-need students in grades K-12 in North Carolina.⁸

The needs of students exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic emphasize the need for a continued focus on students’ academic, and social and emotional learning. Further, with the majority of schools and districts in the U.S. reporting a focus on developing the social and emotional skills of students⁹, investments in evidence-based SEL programs and practices are more important than ever.

Thank you for carefully considering our request. We would be pleased to discuss the SEL grants within the EIR program as the appropriations process unfolds this year.

³ Cipriano, Christina, et al. “Stage 2 Report: The State of the Evidence for Social and Emotional Learning: A Contemporary Meta-Analysis of Universal School-Based SEL Interventions.” 2 Feb. 2023, <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/mk35u>.

⁴ Belfield, Clive, et al.. “The Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning.” Feb. 2015, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/583b86882e69cfc61c6c26dc/t/59089094cd0f6810013b15ff/1493733525917/SEL-Revised.pdf>.

⁵ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. *Designing and Implementing Social Emotional Learning Programs to Promote Equity*, AnLar, 4 Feb. 2022. https://oese.ed.gov/files/2022/03/FINAL-EIR_SEL-Programs-White-Paper.pdf.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Duchesneau, Nancy. The Education Trust, 2020, *Social, Emotional, and Academic Development Through an Equity Lens*, <https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Social-Emotional-and-Academic-Development-Through-an-Equity-Lens-August-6-2020.pdf>.

Sincerely,