Written Testimony of the Learning and Education Academic Research Network (LEARN) Coalition Regarding FY2026 Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related research programs before the Senate Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) with respect to funding for the National Science Foundation
June 13, 2025

On behalf of the LEARN Coalition, we respectfully urge the Subcommittee to support increased funding for critical Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) research programs as part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 appropriations process. LEARN is a national alliance of 43 leading research colleges of education dedicated to advancing the scientific understanding of learning and development. We advocate for robust federal investment in education research across agencies—especially at the National Science Foundation (NSF). For FY 26, we request $9.9 billion for NSF overall and $1.53 billion for the Directorate for STEM Education (EDU).

NSF plays a pivotal role in supporting rigorous, ethical research that improves classroom instruction, strengthens teacher preparation, and addresses persistent challenges in K–12 and higher education. NSF-funded initiatives have produced measurable benefits—such as data-driven math interventions, technology-enhanced science instruction, and proven professional development models for educators. These investments yield tangible returns by directly supporting student achievement and improving teaching nationwide.

The EDU Directorate is especially well-positioned to advance this mission. Through research on how students learn STEM content and how educators can most effectively deliver it, EDU equips schools and districts with evidence-based tools that drive educational improvement. Its funding supports innovative curriculum development, scalable training models, and partnerships between universities and school systems. That is why we continue to strongly support a $1.53 billion appropriation for EDU in FY 26.

Investments in EDU are not only timely—they are among the most effective uses of taxpayer dollars. These programs provide a strong return by translating research—including the responsible use of artificial intelligence—into classroom practice, ensuring our education system can prepare future scientists, engineers, and problem-solvers. As global competition for STEM talent increases and domestic research infrastructure faces continued pressure, EDU's work is essential to maintaining U.S. competitiveness and economic security.

President Trump's FY 26 budget request significantly reduces funding to NSF overall and specifically reduces funding to the EDU directorate by 75 percent. These funding levels leave the agency under-resourced at a time of growing demand. Funding reduction restricts grant access, slows progress on urgent challenges, and limits the capacity of researchers to deliver practical solutions for schools and educators.

Operational challenges, including recent staffing reductions, also pose serious risks to NSF's ability to carry out its mission. Without sufficient personnel and resources, grant processing may slow and support for high-impact research may be delayed. These inefficiencies ultimately shortchange students, educators, and the taxpayers who expect their investments to yield meaningful results.

America's leadership in STEM innovation depends on a strong foundation in education research. Strategic investments in NSF and EDU represent not only a commitment to educational excellence—they reflect a sound, results-oriented use of public funds that drives national progress.

The LEARN Coalition urges the Subcommittee to appropriate $9.9 billion for NSF and $1.53 billion for the EDU Directorate in FY 2026. These investments will strengthen the research infrastructure behind effective teaching, support student learning, and ensure taxpayer dollars are used to generate the greatest possible public benefit. We thank you for your consideration and would be pleased to provide additional information or examples of NSF-supported research that is delivering real results across the country.

Sincerely,
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