

May 12, 2017

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, and Education  
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor  
Health and Human Services, and Education  
Senate Appropriations Committee

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We support a continued commitment to funding the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act in the Fiscal Year 2018 Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Bill.

Gifted and talented students have unique learning needs that require specialized instruction. Gifted students do not achieve top levels of performance or remain high performing on their own. They need to be stimulated and challenged and their intellectual talent must be developed through rigorous curriculum delivered by teachers trained to identify and support talent. Regrettably, not all school districts have leaders trained in gifted education techniques on whom teachers may rely for assistance in responding appropriately to student needs.

State, national, and international data show that we are failing to develop advanced levels of talent in all our student populations. The achievement gap at the top of the learning spectrum has serious implications for the health of our economy and our ability to compete in this truly global society. The gaps between the percentage of students performing at advanced levels between different subgroups, dubbed “excellence gaps,” are not due to a lack of student ability, but rather a lack of attention to developing high achievement in every student population.

The Javits program, which was reauthorized in the Every Student Succeeds Act, focuses on the very populations that the excellence gaps show are not being attended to. The Act funds research-based demonstration grants with a priority on identifying and serving high-ability students in underserved populations and disseminating the findings to enable schools and classrooms to improve their practice. Prior Javits grants developed high-level curriculum that is being used in disadvantaged schools across the nation; new assessments that allow schools to identify English language learners with high ability; and teacher training strategies so that general education teachers can identify students with academic potential and provide classroom support.

Javits-funded research results have helped school districts to increase student achievement. We must renew our commitment to this small but effective program to ensure that all our gifted and talented students are able to reach their full potential – not only for themselves, but for our future. Therefore, we request that you maintain the investment in the Javits program in the FY 2018 Labor, HHS, and Education Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,