June 28, 2021

Dear Chairman Coons and Ranking Member Graham,

Thank you for your commitment to fighting extreme poverty and improving education for children in need around the world. We are writing to urge you to provide strong support for Basic Education in the fiscal year 2022 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, including funding for U.S. Government international education programs, the Global Partnership for Education, and Education Cannot Wait.

Bolstering global education serves U.S. interests by building the next generation of leaders, entrepreneurs and innovators, strengthening important diplomatic and cultural ties with countries, and promoting our shared goal of building a more stable, prosperous and equitable world.

COVID-19 has disrupted the education of over 91 percent of the world’s children and youth and severely exacerbated a pre-existing global learning crisis. Worldwide, 826 million students do not have a computer and 706 million students lack internet access at home. For children who have been deprived of access to school and distance learning during the pandemic, learning loss and other harms pose a generational threat that could widen existing gaps in educational and economic attainment in low- and middle-income countries. Research indicates that a three-month school closure could cost children over a year’s worth of learning and, if left unaddressed, many children may never catch up.

U.S. Basic Education assistance strives to increase access to quality education, provide children with foundational reading, math, social and emotional skills, and prepare youth for successful careers. To recover from COVID-19 globally and prepare for future emergencies that could further disrupt education, U.S. foreign assistance will need to support improved access to distance learning materials and technology, safe school reopening plans, reenrollment initiatives for out-of-school children and youth, and curriculum and teaching adaptation to ensure that all students get back on track and reach their full potential.

U.S. support for multilateral partnerships, including the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Education Cannot Wait (ECW), complements our bilateral programs and leverages additional resources for this important work. During the COVID-19 pandemic, multilateral organizations have been quick to respond to the dire education needs of children. GPE has mobilized $500 million to help developing countries mitigate both the immediate and long-term
disruptions to education being caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. ECW activated $140 million in 2020, including through its First Emergency Response fund, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which aims to reach 32 million children in 34 countries.

To sustain and enhance international efforts to support learning during and after COVID-19, it will be imperative for the Subcommittee to fully fund Basic Education in the Fiscal Year 2022 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. We greatly appreciate your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator
Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

Tim Kaine  
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Raphael G. Warnock
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Alex Padilla
United States Senator
Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator

Mark Kelly
United States Senator

/Martín Heinrich
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator