

**Biden-Harris Transition Team**

**Testimony Regarding  
Institute of Education Sciences, US Department of Education**

**Submitted by**

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We write to urge the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), U.S. Department of Education, to reinstate the funding program for *Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships in Education*. This important funding program has previously provided critical support for collaborative partnerships that connect research institutions with local and state education agencies, many of which have the explicit aim of improving educational equity. These partnerships work to ensure that education decision makers are informed by research that is accessible, applicable, and actionable by inviting education leaders to partner with researchers to jointly develop a research agenda and theory of action that leads to improved outcomes for students. Without this connection, many public and private research dollars are spent on projects that are inaccessible, inapplicable, or irrelevant to education decision makers who instead are forced to rely on information produced by lobbyists and vendors or worse, use no research at all.

Using research to inform education decision making is vital to our nation’s efforts to improve educational equity by race, ethnicity, economic status, and other factors associated with inequitable educational opportunities. Allowing these inequities to persist is not only morally wrong but also extremely costly. Federal and state expenditures on health care, crime, and welfare are much higher for populations with lower education levels.<sup>1</sup> In particular, gaps in academic achievement cost the US economy trillions of dollars per year – not to mention the social cost of untapped human potential.<sup>2</sup> The cost of reinstating funding for the *Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships in Education* program is miniscule compared to the benefits of improving educational equity.

While the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) advances equity and emphasizes the use of evidence-based and place-based innovations, provisions must be made to support these goals. Although local and state education agencies collect massive amounts of student data, most have extremely limited research capacity, so they are unable to use their data for much more than state-mandated reporting. At the same time, research institutions have unparalleled research capacity, but their research rarely informs education decision makers directly. One promising way to bridge this knowledge gap is through research-practice partnerships. Therefore, we strongly urge the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), U.S. Department of Education, to reinstate the funding program for *Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships in Education*.

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<sup>1</sup> Belfield, Clive and Henry M. Levin. 2013. “The Cumulative Costs of the Opportunity Gap,” in K. Welner and P. Carter (Eds.), *Closing the Opportunity Gap* (pp. 195-206). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Auguste, Byron G., Bryan Hancock, and Martha Laboissiere. 2009. “The Economic Cost of the US Education Gap,” McKinsey & Company.

Sincerely,

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**About the authors:**

**Ruth N. López Turley** founded and directs the Houston Education Research Consortium (HERC), a research-practice partnership between Rice University and eleven Houston area school districts, representing over 700,000 students. Founded in 2011, HERC is a program of the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University that aims to improve educational equity by connecting research to policy and practice, working directly with district leaders. She also helped start the National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships, which supports over 40 partnerships between research institutions and education agencies throughout the country. A graduate of Stanford and Harvard, she has received numerous teaching and mentoring awards and has served in elected and appointed positions in the American Sociological Association, the American Educational Research Association, the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness, and the National Research Council of the National Academies. She is originally from Laredo, Texas.

**Paula Arce-Trigatti** is the Director of the National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships (NNERPP), a professional learning organization for education RPPs, launched in 2016 at the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University. In this role, Arce-Trigatti organizes and coordinates a number of learning opportunities for members across the Network and the RPP field at-large in order to improve both our theoretical understanding of partnerships and how they actually work in practice. She additionally oversees the maintenance of an up-to-date online repository of RPP-related resources via the “NNERPP RPP Knowledge Clearinghouse,” collaboratively designs RPP tools and resources with members to support RPP development, and coordinates cross-partnership presentations at a variety of national research conferences. She holds a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Houston, as well as an M.S. in economics, a B.A. in Music, and a B.S. in Business, all from Florida State University.