April XX, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and
Human Services, and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and
Human Services, and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Moran:

As you work towards finalizing the Subcommittee's Fiscal Year 2015 Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you provide the highest feasible funding for the Math and Science Partnerships, STEM Master Teacher Corps, and other initiatives designed to improve teaching and learning in STEM subjects.

STEM education is closely linked with our nation's economic prosperity in the modern global economy and strong STEM skills are a central element of a well-rounded education. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, 60 percent of U.S. employers are having difficulties finding qualified workers to fill vacancies at their companies. While the U.S. economy grapples with economic recovery, job postings in in the STEM occupations outnumber unemployed workers by nearly two to one. At all levels of educational attainment, STEM job holders earn 11 percent higher wages compared with their same-degree counterparts in other jobs. 47 percent of people with Bachelor's degrees in STEM occupations earn more than PhDs in non-STEM occupations.

Over the past decade, Congress has maintained a strong bipartisan commitment to federal investments in STEM education that help to train our students for the jobs of the future. Improving the proficiency of all students in STEM subjects will help to increase the number of students who pursue STEM careers and meet the growing demand of employers for workers trained in these fields. It will also enhance the U.S.'s ability to compete with other countries that are currently outpacing us in STEM education.

The Department of Education's existing Math and Science Partnerships is a proven program that provides formula grant resources to states, which in turn administer grant competitions where partnerships exist between high-need school districts and local universities, businesses, and non-profits to implement research-based best practices in schools. The program annually impacts nearly 2.4 million students and 43,000 STEM educators, coaches, and administrators. Based on the latest independent evaluation of the program, more than 61% of participating math teachers and 69% of science teachers demonstrated measurable gains in their content knowledge in STEM subjects and more than 66% of students in the program for whom data was available demonstrated proficiency in math and science tests- roughly twice the national average. We support the highest feasible funding level for this initiative.

Another key area of investment in STEM education involves identifying, supporting, and retaining the very best STEM educators. We support providing funding for a STEM Master Teacher Corps program at the Department of Education in order to determine the most effective strategies for recruiting and retaining highly qualified educators, especially among STEM degree holders. STEM skills are valuable, and individuals with these skills are often drawn away from teaching by more lucrative and prestigious opportunities outside of K-12 education. The STEM Master Teacher Corps program has the potential to significantly grow and strengthen the STEM education workforce.

For all of these reasons, STEM education must be elevated as a national priority. Empowering U.S. schools to provide our children with the STEM knowledge and problem-solving skills they will need to land the best, most innovative – and highest-paying and most secure – jobs of the future is critical to promoting American economic prosperity. We therefore request that you provide robust support for the Department of Education's STEM education activities, including those we have outlined. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,