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**Grace Meng**

**Congress of the United States**

**Sixth District, New York**

November 3, 2023

The Honorable Michael McCaul  
Chairman  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gregory Meeks  
Ranking Member  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
2471 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman McCaul and Ranking Member Meeks,

Thank you for facilitating today's House Foreign Affairs Committee Member Day. Amidst an increasing number of global crises and conflicts, and related legislation being considered by this Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to shine a light on an issue impacting children and youth around the world – access to quality basic education – and a bill dedicated to promoting this fundamental human right, the *READ Act Reauthorization Act of 2023*, [H.R. 681](#).

As a senior member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, I know the importance of smart investments in international development. They are not only the right thing to do, but they are also in the best interest of our national security and shared economic prosperity. That is why I am proud to be a co-lead of the bipartisan, bicameral *READ Act Reauthorization Act*, along with my colleague, Congressman Chris Smith. The *READ Act Reauthorization Act* has widespread, bipartisan support, with 41 cosponsors in the House, including 13 members of this committee from both sides of the aisle.

Access to quality education around the world is an essential element of any peaceful and flourishing society. Since the *Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development (READ) Act*, ([P.L. 115-56](#)), was enacted in 2017, U.S. basic education programs have benefitted students, educators, and education systems around the world. In Fiscal Year 2022 alone, the U.S. Government was able to reach over 32 million learners in 97 countries around the world, distribute over 12 million textbooks and other learning materials, and train and provide professional development to over 820,000 teachers and educators. Critically, these basic education programs are also improving the resiliency capabilities of education systems – in response to the COVID-19 pandemic—to ensure access to safe, quality learning in the face of future shocks.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Fiscal Year 2022 U.S. Government Strategy Report to Congress,” USAID, <https://www.edulinks.org/resources/fiscal-year-2022-us-government-strategy-report-congress>.

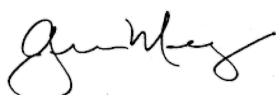
Fundamentally, the *READ Act Reauthorization Act* contributes to the wellbeing and prosperity of the next generation of leaders. At the individual level, education provides a roadmap toward gainful employment, health, and poverty reduction. For each additional year of education, future wages increase by nine percent. At the community level, education spurs long-term economic growth, strengthens democratic institutions, and promotes social cohesion.<sup>2</sup> According to Oxfam, no country has achieved continuous and rapid economic growth without at least 40% of adults being able to read and write.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, the authorities under the *READ Act* expired at the end of Fiscal Year 2023. It is critical that we pass its reauthorization as soon as possible. The longer we allow the authorizing language to remain in limbo, the more we risk our global education strategy and its accountability and transparency measures. As time passes, uncertainty within USAID missions could delay program execution, causing local partners to question the reliability of U.S. partnership in education. Furthermore, READ's lapse represents a major lack of interest and support in international education from this Congress, which is certainly not a message we want to continue sending.

This is why it is critically important that the House Foreign Affairs Committee consider [H.R. 681](#), the bipartisan and bicameral *READ Act Reauthorization Act of 2023*, at the next possible full committee markup opportunity this year. Additionally, I strongly support its inclusion in any vehicle moving through the House to the president's desk this year. This straightforward reauthorization bill will ensure that the United States' leadership on basic education continues for an additional five fiscal years.

Thank you very much for considering this request.

Sincerely,



Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

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<sup>2</sup> World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/overview>.

<sup>3</sup> Literacy Worldwide citing Oxfam, <https://www.literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/resource-documents/ila-take-action-benefits.pdf>.