

25 June 2014

The Honorable Joe Garcia
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Garcia:

As Executive Director of TESOL International Association, I am writing in support of the English Learning and Innovation Act. This important legislation will provide critically needed funds and resources to districts in order to spur innovation and build capacity to address the fastest growing population of students in U.S. schools: English learners (ELs).

Statistics have shown that the population of ELs in US schools has increased approximately 60% since the late 1990s, and is continuing to grow. Experts predict that ELs will constitute up to 25% of the U.S. public school population by 2025. Despite this continued growth, funding for English Language Acquisition State Grants under Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) has increased only 10% over the last decade. The limited funds under Title III can only go so far to have a significant impact upon the education of ELs, over 70% of whom are born in the United States. With a persistent achievement gap between ELs and their native English speaking peers, more resources are needed to help the U.S. education system advance in its ability to support the needs of these students.

The English Learning and Innovation Act will help augment instruction for ELs by creating two funding streams targeted to specific areas of need in the field: innovation and capacity building. The Innovation Grants will help foster innovative approaches for effective language instructional programs for ELs, while the Capacity Building Grants will provide much-needed resources to develop capacity and expertise for those states that have seen dramatic increases in their EL population – some as high as 200% – within a short period of time. By focusing attention to the diverse needs of ELs, including secondary-age students who are recently arrived to U.S. schools, and student who are long-time ELs, the English learning and innovation Act can have a significant impact in improving the education of ELs in a variety of districts and settings.

Thank you for your leadership and support on this issue. TESOL International Association welcomes the opportunity to be a resource for you and your staff, and looks forward to working on helping to pass this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Rosa Aronson, PhD, CAE
Executive Director

CC: Yilin Sun, President
Andy Curtis, President-elect
Deena Boraie, Past President