

July 25, 2011

The Honorable Michael Bennet
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

On behalf of the over 12,000 members of TESOL International Association, I am writing in support of the English Learning and Innovation Act of 2011 (S 1158). This important legislation will provide critically needed funds and resources to districts to spur innovation and build capacity to address the fastest growing population of students in U.S. schools: English language learners (ELLs).

Founded in 1966, TESOL International Association (TESOL) is a professional community of educators, researchers, administrators and students committed to advancing excellence in English language teaching for speakers of other languages worldwide. With members in over 150 countries, TESOL fosters the exchange of ideas, research and peer-to-peer knowledge, and provides expertise, resources and a powerful voice on issues affecting the profession of English language teaching.

Statistics have shown that the population of ELLs in US schools has increased approximately 60% since the late 1990s. 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 – \$750 million in FY2011 – can only go so far to have a significant impact upon the education of ELLs, over 70% of whom are born in the United States. With a persistent achievement gap between ELLs 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 ELLs 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 ELLs, 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 ELL population – some as high as 200% – within a short period of time.

Thank you for your leadership and support of this important legislation. 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: Christine Coombe, President
Suzanne Panferov, President-elect
Brock Brady, Past President