

May 23, 2025

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Capito, Chair Aderholt, Ranking Member Baldwin, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

UnidosUS and the 81 undersigned organizations write to urge you to include **\$1 billion** for the **English Language Acquisition grant program**, authorized by **Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**, without cutting funding for other education programs, in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. Title III is the primary federal grant program dedicated to providing English learners (ELs) with the resources they need to attain English language proficiency and meet the same challenging academic standards as their peers.

We urge you to fully reject President Trump's budget proposal to eliminate Title III. Congress established Title III more than two decades ago to ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to learn, regardless of the language they speak at home. Congress has long understood the imperative of ensuring English learners have access to a meaningful, high-quality education and has consistently funded Title III. Congress must not betray their commitment to English learner education, as our nation cannot afford the consequences of leaving these students behind.

However, keeping the status quo of funding is not enough. English learners represent one in ten of all K-12 public school students nationwide and this group continues to grow across the country, from rural communities to urban centers.ⁱ Title III has failed to keep pace with growing demographics, creating a widening gap between student needs and available resources for essential language and academic development. English learner enrollment surged by over 700,000 students in a decade (from 4.6 million in 2011 to 5.3 million in 2021), representing a 15% increase,ⁱⁱ while Title III appropriations increased by 8% during that same timeframe.ⁱⁱⁱ Even more alarming, Congress has frozen Title III at \$890 million for two appropriations cycles.

Congress must prioritize increased Title III funding to \$1 billion to support the over 5 million English learners in America's classrooms.^{iv}

Research shows that with support, most ELs acquire English proficiency within five to seven years are then reclassified as English proficient.^v Several studies show that former ELs can go on to outperform their non-EL peers across multiple academic measures, revealing what these students can accomplish when properly supported. However, without appropriate interventions, ELs can become long-term English learners (LTELs), which are more likely to fare worse academically than ELs who learn English on time.^{vi}

Across all 50 states, schools rely on Title III funds to provide supports, including language and academic content instruction programs, evidence-based professional development for educators, and family engagement activities that enhance language instruction.^{vii} ESSA provides schools flexibility to tailor instruction to meet the needs of their unique communities, as it neither requires nor prohibits the use of a specific curriculum or approach.

Investing in English learners delivers exceptional returns for our economy and society. When these students achieve English proficiency and strong academic skills, they can access higher-paying jobs, contribute more tax revenue, and help fill critical workforce gaps. Investing in Title III delivers powerful returns as each dollar supports students who can go on to become tomorrow's entrepreneurs, healthcare workers, and innovative problem-solvers who strengthen both local economies and America's global competitiveness.

In addition to providing increased funding for Title III, it is critical that the subcommittee ensure the efficient distribution and use of these funds. Unfortunately, on March 11th, the U.S. Department of Education ("the Department") terminated nearly all staff within the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), which administers the Title III program. Additionally, in a March 14th letter to State Education Chiefs, the Department stated its intention to move OELA to the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). These shortsighted decisions by the Department are a significant disruption to the administration of Title III and a disservice to EL education.

Terminating OELA staff who held critical expertise on EL education undermines the Department's ability to efficiently administer Title III grants, provide technical assistance to states, and hold states accountable for meeting their legal obligations to ELs. Furthermore, moving OELA to OESE means that ELs would no longer be front and center, instead just one of many focuses in an office that already manages a wide range of programs. The Department's programs supporting ELs require and deserve the focus of a specific office focused on best serving their needs.

Therefore, we strongly urge the subcommittee to include bill language in the FY 2026 LHHS appropriations measure instructing the Secretary to restore OELA as a standalone office with adequate staffing within 30 days of enactment. Such actions will reinforce OELA's charge to administer the Title III program, as only OELA is positioned to do efficiently and in the best interests of ELs.

We are committed to supporting our nation's 5.3 million EL students and ensuring that they have access to the same meaningful, high-quality education that their non-EL peers do. Our nation's future prosperity depends on their success. We respectfully urge you to provide \$1 billion for

Title III in FY 2026 and restore OELA's status as a standalone office with adequate staffing. Should you have any questions, please contact Amalia Chamorro, Director, Education Policy Project, UnidosUS at achamorro@unidosus.org.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

UnidosUS
ACTFL
All4Ed
APIA Scholars
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents - ALAS
Center for Applied Linguistics
Children's Defense Fund
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Coalition on Human Needs
EdTrust
Education Law Center
Education Reform Now
Empowering Latino Futures
English Learner Portal
Feminist Majority Foundation
IDRA
Immigrant Connections
Joint National Committee for Languages
KIPP Foundation
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
NAELPA
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity
National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council for Languages and International Studies
National Education Association
National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC)
National Parents Union
National PLACE
Seal of Biliteracy.org
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
TESOL International Association
The Leadership Conference for Civil and Human Rights

Alabama

Hispanic and Immigrant Center of Alabama (¡HICA!)

Arizona

YWCA of Southern Arizona

California

Amethod Public Schools

Building Skills Partnership (BSP)

CABE • California Association for Bilingual Education

Californians Together

Camino Nuevo Charter Academy

Collegiate Charter High School of Los Angeles

El Sol Science and Arts Academy

La Raza Community Resource Center (San Francisco)

Para Los Niños

Pueblo Nuevo Education and Development Group

PUENTE Learning Center

Semillas - Anahuacalmecac

Wallis Annenberg High School

YPI Charter Schools

Colorado

Colorado Latino Leadership, Advocacy & Research Organization (CLLARO)

Delaware

Latin American Community Center

Illinois

Acero Schools

Erie Neighborhood House

Kansas

El Centro Inc

Louisiana

Puentes New Orleans

Massachusetts

East Boston Community Council

Lawrence CommunityWorks

Michigan

Southwest Solutions dba MiSide

Missouri

Mattie Rhodes Center

Nebraska

Nebraska Commission on Latino Americans

Nevada
REACH

New York
Amber Charter Schools
Dominico-American Society of Queens

Ohio
El Centro de Servicios Sociales, Inc
ESPERANZA INC
HOLA Ohio

Oregon
Centro Cultural
El Programa Hispano Catolico
Latino Network

Pennsylvania
El Concilio
Esperanza Academy
Congreso de Latinos Unidos
Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley

Tennessee
Centro Hispano de East Tennessee
Conexion Americas
La Paz Chattanooga

Texas
Con Mi MADRE
Multicultural Family Center
VIDA

Wisconsin
La Casa De Esperanza Charter School
La Causa Inc.

ⁱ “English Learners: Demographic Trends.” National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition. Accessed April 25, 2025.
https://ncela.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/ELDemographics_20220805_508.pdf

ii National Center for Education Statistics. 2024. English Learners in Public Schools: Condition of Education. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. May 2024. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf>.

iii Education Department Budget History Table: FY 1980 -- FY 2021 Congressional Appropriations . n.d. U.S. Department of Education. Accessed February 13, 2025.
<https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ed.gov%2Fsites%2Fed%2Ffiles%2Fabout%2Foverview%2Fbudget%2Fhistory%2Fedhistory.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>.

iv “English Learners: Demographic Trends.” National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition. Accessed April 25, 2025.
https://ncela.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/ELDemographics_20220805_508.pdf.

v Learning Policy Institute. (2024, December 4). *Long-term English learners in California* [Fact sheet].
<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/ca-long-term-english-learners-factsheet>

vi Villegas, Leslie. 2023. Review of *Accountability for Long-Term English Learners*. KAPPAN. PDK International. September 25, 2023. <https://kappanonline.org/accountability-for-english-learners-villegas/>.

vii U.S. Department of Education. 2024. *English Language Acquisition: Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request*. U.S. Department of Education. March 11, 2024. <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/overview/budget/budget25/justifications/i-ela.pdf>.