

May 20, 2025

Honorable Susan Collins  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Patty Murray  
Vice Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Collins, Chairman Cole, Vice Chairwoman Murray, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

Thank you for your continued leadership in fighting for essential federal resources in response to the persistent challenges schools and students, especially those most marginalized and vulnerable, are facing. As you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2026 (FY 26) appropriations process, we, the undersigned organizations working to advance civil rights and educational opportunity, urge the committees to consider the policies and funding levels articulated below to ensure every student has access to the resources they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

Young people in this country deserve more than political chaos; they deserve sustained investment, stability, and opportunity. Yet instead of the federal leadership needed to help students recover and succeed, they are facing a troubling pattern of disinvestment and disruption.

The administration has put forth a series of actions to undermine public education, including executive orders to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education (ED), threaten students' sense of safety and belonging in schools, and promote using public funds for private and parochial schools. Significant reductions in force at ED have already substantially undermined the agency's ability to fulfill its responsibilities to America's students and families, including enforcing students' civil rights, administering grants that support schools and districts, providing guidance on meeting the needs of students with disabilities, English learners, and students experiencing homelessness, and ensuring students are able to receive financial aid to pursue higher education. The termination of numerous ED grants and contracts have disrupted programs that prepared and strengthened our teacher workforce, developed innovative solutions for students, or provided technical assistance to schools, districts, and states. The decimation of the Institute of Education Sciences will leave families, students, educators, researchers, and policymakers without foundational information, research, and support to know how students are doing and what practices and policies are effective in supporting learning.

The President's FY 2026 budget recommendation proposed further cuts to public education and ED's capacity to protect and serve our students, including slashing resources for K-12, college access programs, and the Office for Civil Rights. In this critical moment, our students need courageous leaders to safeguard federal investments and protections that promote access to high-quality education for all.

**Congress must reject the 15.3% cut to the Department of Education and other reductions to investments in the nation's children and youth proposed by the Trump Administration.** The nation's

young people need and deserve greater, not less, federal support. The programs and funding levels highlighted below help address the challenges facing students, among them: the end of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds, reduced availability of student supports and education services, inequitable access to learning resources, food insecurity, intermittent access to high-speed home internet, and homelessness, alongside long-standing systemic inequities. To that end, as you develop FY 2026 appropriations legislation, we strongly support the following funding levels for these essential programs and urge Congress to specify them in appropriation text to ensure federal funds are used for the intended purpose under law:

**Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Programs:**

- **ESSA funds should not be block granted.** Accountability and oversight are essential for ensuring funds serve students as programs intend.
- **In addition to at least a \$2.2 billion increase for Title I, Part A, as an investment toward tripling funding for the program, we recommend:**
  - **Targeting Title I funds toward the highest-poverty school districts.** We recommend that any new funding be allocated through the Targeted Grant and Education Finance Incentive Grant (EFIG) formulas or another formula that is more targeted toward high-poverty districts, and allocates at least as great a percentage of funds to school districts in the top two quintiles of poverty nationally as the Targeted and EFIG formulas.
  - **At least a \$1 billion increase for evidence-based school improvement activities** required under section 1003 of ESEA. This could be accomplished through the required state set-aside of Title I, Part A funds (if the Title I allocation is significantly increased, as we recommend above) or through a separate infusion of extra funding, on top of the Title I appropriation, for schools that states identify as in need of support under ESEA. Additional funding for school improvement will help ensure there are sufficient resources to develop, implement, and sustain comprehensive, multi-year plans to address the increased needs of districts and schools serving students most impacted by the pandemic as states use their accountability systems to identify new schools, including those identified for Targeted Supported and Improvement (TSI) based on individual groups of students, for additional support. In particular, these funds can also be used to embed and sustain support services for students most affected by pandemic disruptions beyond the expiration of ESSER funding. We also encourage you to include language to help states improve reporting on the schools receiving 1003(a) funds and how the funds are used, as required by section 1003(i) of ESEA, so there is more transparent information on which students benefit from these resources and the evidence-based strategies schools are using.
  - **\$435 million for Title I, Part C** to support the educational needs of students from migratory backgrounds. These funds help states and districts meet these students' distinct needs and ensure they receive full and appropriate opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic standards as all children. These funds support, for example, identifying and enrolling students from migratory backgrounds, providing instructional and support services, and collaboration with other organizations and programs supporting this population.
- **\$3 billion for Title II, Part A of ESEA** to support local efforts to diversify the teaching

workforce, advance teacher leadership, and provide high-quality teacher professional development – including support for high-quality induction and mentorship, training in culturally responsive instruction, supports for English learners and students with disabilities, social and emotional development, restorative justice, and trauma-informed instructional practices.

- **\$200 million to support Teacher and School Leader Incentive Grant.** Specifically, we support requiring the Department of Education to prioritize funds for teacher leadership models and activities that provide experienced and effective teacher leadership opportunities that allow them to have a greater impact on their school community while remaining in the classroom—and be compensated for additional responsibilities. This could include, for example, distributive leadership models which allow teachers to lead alongside their principal to facilitate positive school wide change; teacher-led instructional improvement efforts focused on specific areas of academic content; opportunities to shape school wide policies and climate, and lead professional learning communities; participation in master teacher programs, teacher mentorship programs, and job-embedded content coaching; and implementation of advisory systems.
- **\$200 million for the Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grant** program which funds the implementation of research-based practices to support the preparation and professional learning of teachers, principals, and other school leaders. This program is vital for developing high-quality educators, who are crucial for improving literacy and STEM outcomes for our students.
- **\$40 million for the School Leadership Recruitment and Support Program** to increase student access to well-prepared and diverse school leaders.
- **\$1 billion for Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act**, which provides English learners (ELs) access to the resources they need to learn English and meet the same challenging academic standards as their peers. Increased funding is necessary to support the growing number of English learners and recent immigrant students. English learners account for over 1 in 10 of all K-12 public school students in the U.S, yet as this population has grown, funding has not kept pace. Title III helps states and districts meet the needs of these students by supporting effective language and academic instruction programs, professional development for EL educators, and community engagement activities that enhance language instruction.
- **\$5.2 billion for Title IV programs**, including:
  - **\$1.6 billion in Title IV, Part A funding** for the breadth of academic, mental, physical, social, and emotional student supports and services, such as funding for school counselors, social workers, nurses, and nutrition programs, and for closing the digital divide. Additionally, we encourage Congress to exercise oversight to help ensure the funding provided by the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act is allocated towards student support programs and staff, and evidence-based practices, through possible incentives and supports to assist states in implementing those evidence-based practices in high-need schools.
  - **\$1.8 billion in Title IV, Part B funding** to support 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which offer robust afterschool and extended learning time programs.

- **\$500 million within Title IV, Part D for the Magnet School Assistance Program.** Research shows magnet schools support school integration and have positive academic and social outcomes for students, yet the Magnet School Assistance Program has been underfunded.
- **\$1 billion for Title IV, Part F** for Full-Service Community Schools, which encourage coordination of academic, social, and health services through partnerships among public elementary and secondary schools, LEAs, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and other public or private entities.

#### **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Programs:**

- **IDEA funds should not be consolidated or block granted.** Technical assistance, funding for personnel preparation grants, and other federal supports for students with disabilities are essential to full implementation of IDEA.
- **\$16.661 billion for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B**, which would provide a significant increase to programs and services authorized by IDEA and create a path for full funding.
- **\$300 million for IDEA, Part D personnel preparation program** to support the development of our nation's special education educators.

#### **McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program:**

- **\$200 million for the McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program.** Homelessness presents distinct challenges to school attendance and academic success, requiring targeted services and policies to overcome. The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program uniquely provides these supports—including transportation, outreach, enrollment assistance, school supplies, and designated staff who help connect students to community resources. As the only federal program specifically focused on ensuring that children and youth experiencing homelessness can attend and succeed in school, EHCY plays a unique and critical role. Established in 1987 under President Reagan and backed by decades of bipartisan support, the program addresses the educational consequences of homelessness—such as higher rates of chronic absenteeism and lower graduation rates compared to low-income peers with stable housing. Encouragingly, [recent research](#) shows that school districts receiving EHCY funding have seen measurable gains in both attendance and academic achievement. Without this funding, homeless students risk losing access to the essential educational opportunities they need to break the cycle of poverty and achieve long-term stability..

#### **Higher Education Act (HEA) Programs:**

- **\$1 billion for the Teacher Quality Partnership Grant Program** to support year-long, paid teacher and school leader residency programs and Grow Your Own (GYO) programs, which prepare candidates to serve in high-need rural, suburban, and urban schools. If TQP funding is not increased this year there will not be sufficient funding to fully support continuation grantees, let alone make new grants. This program is critical for addressing the teacher shortage.
- **\$300 million in the Augustus Hawkins Centers of Excellence Program** to support comprehensive teacher preparation at programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and minority-serving institutions of higher

education (MSIs).

- **Double TEACH Grants from \$4,000 to \$8,000** so the program more effectively underwrites the cost of comprehensive preparation and lowers inequitable affordability barriers faced by students of color and students experiencing low incomes. To make the program more effective, the loan conversion penalty should be removed, or reformed, and early educators should be made eligible for benefits.
- **\$165 million for Postsecondary Student Success Grants**, which will support the implementation and expansion of evidence-based practices that improve postsecondary retention and completion.
- **\$60 million for new investments in a Holistic Student Supports program and a new Postsecondary Advancement and Success Technical Assistance Center** to facilitate student access to state and local benefits, and provide resources to institutions implementing student support programs.

#### **Data, Innovation, and Connectivity Programs:**

- **At least \$900 million for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES)**, to ensure equitable access to evidence-based educational opportunities. IES provides and supports critical research, data collection, and evaluation to help Congress and the education field understand what works to improve student outcomes and how to use taxpayer dollars effectively.
- **At least \$100 million for the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) program and at least \$40 million for the Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI)**, so state and district leaders can address current and evolving information needs. States need federal funds to modernize their data systems so that they are oriented toward access, support responsive policymaking, and address the complex challenges education leaders are facing. Modernizing state data systems to meet these challenges also requires strong data governance, privacy, and security; joint guidance for SLDS and WDQI grantees will help them develop effective, integrated data systems and the policies and procedures to safeguard that data. Congress should ensure that Federal agencies also offer the technical assistance states need to ensure robust privacy and transparency safeguards are in place.
- **\$469 million for State Assessment Grants** to provide states with the resources necessary to adapt, improve, and conduct critical student assessment activities, which are one necessary component of understanding how the pandemic has impacted student academic learning.
- **Extend funding for the Affordable Connectivity Program** to conform to the reality that home broadband connectivity is a necessity, not a luxury, for today's students. The Affordable Connectivity Program supported 23 million households across the nation. The expiration of this program threatens the ability of the nation's students to do homework, communicate with teachers, and fully participate in a modern education system that increasingly relies on digital tools.

#### **Career and Technical Education Programs:**

- **\$200 million for Career-Connected High Schools** to support the expansion of, and equitable

access to, advanced coursework and pathways that lead to postsecondary credentials of value and ensure greater alignment between states' policies and systems for high school and higher education.

**Resources for critical Department of Education operations:**

Congress should ensure the **Department of Education has adequate dedicated funding and staff capacity** for the agency to fulfill its responsibilities to students, families, and the public, including:

- **Monitoring and enforcing the critical legal protections** for students accessing their education, including under McKinney-Vento's Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (EHCY) (particularly at the state and local liaison levels), Title I and Title III of ESEA, IDEA, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; and to properly exercise the mission of the Office for Civil Rights.
- **Executing and improving all existing data collection activities** – which are key levers to monitor the implementation of critical legal protections for students – so data is collected effectively, reported timely, and available in a public and accessible manner.

As the administration repeatedly undercuts public education, we urge lawmakers to stand up for students and ensure they have the resources they need to succeed, no matter their background or zip code. Every student deserves access to a high-quality education – our democracy, economy, and shared future depend on it.

Sincerely,

All4Ed  
EdTrust  
Educators for Excellence  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
National Parents Union  
SchoolHouse Connection  
UnidosUS