

February 13, 2026

Ashley Townsend
Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Governmental Affairs
Louisiana Department of Education
1201 North Third Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Assistant Superintendent Townsend,

We, the undersigned education and civil rights organizations, write to provide feedback on Louisiana's request for waivers of certain Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requirements under the Consolidated Allocation Plan Proposal.

While we appreciate the intention of aligning planning and spending across funding streams and reducing administrative burden, this proposal lacks sufficient detail to understand (1) which barriers currently exist; (2) how groups of students who are served by the programs for which waivers are requested — such as students from low-income backgrounds, highly mobile students, rural students, English learners, and students in juvenile justice facilities — would continue to receive assistance; and (3) how the proposal would advance student academic achievement. In addition, the plan offers a number of proposed new uses of funds and brand new monitoring and reporting structures, which potentially could create more bureaucratic inefficiencies than the state is looking to address. We offer more detail on these concerns below - and urge Louisiana to reconsider this broad waiver request and instead pursue its goals through existing federal flexibilities.

Need for Meaningful Public Input

We also note that the public comment period on the draft unified allocation plan—less than two weeks—is insufficient to gather meaningful public input from all affected constituencies. We strongly encourage the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) to extend this comment period and disseminate the request for comment across the state. Given that providing a “reasonable opportunity” for public comment, and providing these comments and the state's response to them, is one of the pieces of information Louisiana will be required to submit in any waiver request to the U.S. Department of Education (ESEA section 8401(b)(3)(A)), the current process runs the risk of violating these essential requirements for public transparency and input.

Risks to Vulnerable Student Populations

Louisiana does not need a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to consolidate state administrative funds provided under the ESEA. ESEA section 8201 explicitly permits such an approach, so long as the majority of the state agency's resources come from non-federal sources. However, while the consolidation of state administrative funds is permitted under the ESEA, the consolidation of funds for state activities goes beyond what is permissible. The proposal to consolidate state activities funds from multiple federal funding streams—including those dedicated to support activities for specific groups of students such as English learners—raises serious concerns.

First, the request does not sufficiently demonstrate how it would continue serving these specific student populations, supporting their needs, or closing opportunity and achievement gaps. While the state priority investments listed are important for improving student achievement, including for student

groups in the impacted Title programs—students from low-income backgrounds, English Learners, highly mobile students, rural students, and justice-involved youth often require specific additional services and supports that are not addressed by these listed investments. It is because of this that Congress has, for decades, allocated funding specifically for these populations, including in the Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations process that concluded this earlier this month. This proposed waiver risks denying students access to the support they need.

The proposed waiver would simultaneously weaken transparency into how impacted students in Louisiana are continuing to be served. New reporting procedures outlined in the proposal provide few details about reporting specifically related to the services and supports provided under the programs LDOE seeks to consolidate. This federally-required reporting is essential to ensuring students have access to the services they need to succeed. The consolidation of state funds, combined with more limited reporting puts these students' futures at risk.

Lack of Clarity on Waived Provisions

Moreover, the proposal lacks sufficient details about which specific provisions around state uses of funds will be requested to be waived. Of the provisions cited in the proposal, only ESEA Section 1306(b) is directly related to state activities; the rest only refer to reporting requirements. Any proposal LDOE submits to ED should clearly articulate which requirements about state uses of funds it would like to be waived, so it's clear which student services could be at risk.

Missing Clear Rationale

LDOE's proposal also provides insufficient evidence of the need for this waiver by clearly articulating the "duplicative reporting and administrative burdens" that are currently preventing state-level funds from being used to advance student achievement. In fact, the proposal actually celebrates the great progress the state is already making while abiding by federal requirements.

Additionally, the proposal states that the approval of this waiver would "require the LDOE to develop a new comprehensive and strategic approach to ensure accountability, compliance, and effective use of funds." We believe that transparent monitoring and reporting systems are essential to ensure students are getting equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities. Yet, it is not clear from the proposal how these new procedures would provide similar or improved reporting—particularly around the needs of students in impacted federal programs. Nor is it clear how creating the conditions where an entirely new approach would support the state's goal of reducing administrative burdens for state and district staff.

Instead of a waiver, we encourage Louisiana to continue to utilize the existing transferability provisions in ESEA Section 5103 and other existing allowable flexibilities, as outlined in Appendix E, which would permit some state activities set-aside funds to be consolidated, such as those provided for state activities under existing law, while safeguarding state activities funds designed to support specific groups of students.

Conclusion

Louisiana's request will undermine program-specific guardrails, weaken transparency regarding how federal funds are spent, and divert funds away from students with the greatest needs, including students from low-income backgrounds, English Learners highly mobile students, rural students, and justice-involved youth. Further, the draft plan does not demonstrate how it will improve Louisiana

students' achievement, nor how it will continue to assist the specific groups of students impacted by the broad swath of federal law Louisiana would no longer follow. This request brushes aside far too many of the vital safeguards Congress placed in the ESEA that have ensured access and equal opportunity for all students for the past 60 years.

We urge you to withdraw this request and instead focus on leveraging the flexibilities already in federal law also outlined in the proposal. These flexibilities allow the state to streamline program administration while maintaining the critical civil rights protections and guardrails in the federal law that ensure funds reach the students they are intended to serve, particularly those who are the furthest from opportunity and struggling the most academically.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this proposal.

Sincerely,

All4Ed
EdTrust
EdTrust-Louisiana
National Center for Learning Disabilities