

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 16, 2025

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary McMahon:

We write to express our concern about the delay in providing states and school districts with information about expected formula funding required to be provided to them under the fiscal year 2025 appropriations law and request you re-focus the Department of Education (“Department”) on fulfilling its statutory obligations in a clear, certain and timely manner. States and school districts are best able to plan to most effectively use federal funds with advance knowledge of expected funding, as Congress intends by providing funds on a forward-funded basis. We have seen and heard numerous remarks from you and President Trump about returning education to the states. However, actions to date tell a very different story about the Department’s intentions. We believe you need to immediately change course and work in partnership with states and school districts to help them effectively use federal funds to implement the purposes and requirements of federal law to improve educational opportunities for all students, particularly students from low-income families, students with disabilities, English learners, students experiencing homelessness and other historically underserved students our federal laws specifically require states to support.

Congress passed the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025, which President Trump signed on March 15, 2025. This law includes appropriations to the Department under the terms and conditions of the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024. Under those terms, the Department must allocate formula-grant funding for multiple programs authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The largest of these, the Title I-A grant program, will provide \$18.4 billion by formula to more than 80 percent of the nation’s school districts, and is already factored into budgets for the coming school year that is only a few months away. Public school budgets also already factor in billions in funding for longstanding federal formula grants, including English Language Acquisition Grants, Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants, and more. Yet, it took until May 13, 2025--more than 50 days after enactment of the 2025 appropriations law--for the Department to provide preliminary allocations of the amounts states and their school districts should expect to receive under the Title I-A formula grant programs for the 2025-2026 school year.

This inexcusable delay is in sharp contrast with actions by the Biden administration. After President Biden signed the 2024 appropriations law on March 23, 2024, the Department provided preliminary allocations under the Title I-A program on April 8, 2024, just over two weeks after the appropriations law was signed. The Trump-McMahon Department took more than three times as much time to accomplish this basic task.. We were told your Department’s work would be efficient, particularly after the reduction in force in which you reduced half of the Department’s workforce,¹ but that does not appear to be the case here.

As you know, Title I-A is the largest federal program that provides supplemental funds to more than 80 percent of the nation’s school districts for more than half of all public schools. It also contains critical funding to

¹ <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force#:~:text=%E2%80%9CToday's%20reduction%20in%20force%20reflects,Secretary%20of%20Education%20Linda%20McMahon.>

identify and support the lowest performing public schools in each state and consistently underperforming subgroups of students in public schools in each state, and support students experiencing homelessness. States are required to set-aside a portion of a state's allocation of Title I-A funds for its school support and improvement work without reducing any school district's allocation. The delayed allocation gives states less time to identify these amounts and make decisions about how best to allocate funds as allowed by federal law, which are required to be used for evidence-based interventions designed to help improve student outcomes in the lowest performing public schools in the state and lowest performing subgroups in public schools in the state. In addition, school districts are required to reserve sufficient funds to provide services to students experiencing homelessness in Title I and non-Title I schools. The Department's delayed notification could also make it more difficult for school districts to best serve students experiencing homelessness as required by law.

Unfortunately, the Department's delays also extend to the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) and other programs. REAP supports more than 6,000 rural school districts and was created to address the unique challenges faced by rural schools, including a lower tax base and capacity challenges in seeking competitive funding. Unfortunately, the Department made the application for the Small, Rural Schools Assistance (SRSA) program—one of two REAP grant programs—available on May 14th, with applications due 30 days later on June 13, 2025. By contrast, last year under the Biden administration, the Department released the FY 2024 application for SRSA on March 19, 2024 and provided a 60-day application window. The delayed application and shortened application window under your leadership demonstrate a lack of concern for the challenges rural schools face; or perhaps the Department's workforce reductions have limited its ability to fulfill its statutory obligations in a timely way.

Unfortunately, we must also note the Department has been busy discontinuing funds for hundreds of grantees of school-based mental health programs we have supported through appropriations directives to the Department and the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.² The Department abruptly decided to discontinue expected federal support for more than 200 grants for mental health services in schools after what it claimed, without evidence, was an individualized review of the grants.³ This alleged review led the Department to the conclusion that continuing the grants was not in the "best interest of the Federal Government" and that some of the grants "undermine the well-being of the students these programs are intended to help".⁴ There's bitter irony in the Department's decision only days later to issue updated guidance encouraging states to undertake more work under the unsafe school option provision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act⁵ after discontinuing funds supported on a bipartisan basis for the important federal support it provides for mental health services that can help students feel safe in school and protect them from acts of school violence.⁶

We implore the Department to reverse course, stop creating chaos, provide states and school districts with information about the resources Congress provided in the 2025 appropriations law and begin to support states and their school districts in the effective implementation of federal law. The Department's actions to date have

² <https://apnews.com/article/school-mental-health-grants-trump-biden-dei-00bec2d96371f023ac56fe3f32f3e92f>

³ <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/04/30/education-department-cuts-about-1-billion-in-federal-school-mental-health-grants-00319531>

⁴ https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/news/2024_SBMH_Grant_Award_USDE_Termination_Notice.pdf

⁵ <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-shares-state-guidance-unsafe-school-choice-option>

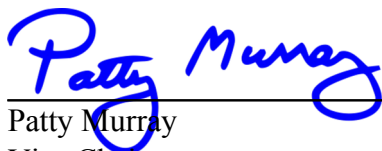
⁶ <https://www.cornyn.senate.gov/news/cornyn-tillis-collins-op-ed-the-bipartisan-safer-communities-act-is-cause-for-optimism/>

only imposed legally dubious policy reversals,⁷⁸⁹ funding cancellations, terminations and reductions,¹⁰¹¹¹² and funding directives¹³¹⁴ that do nothing to support students and educators in improving student learning and outcomes.

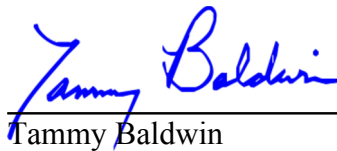
In addition, Congress and American taxpayers continue to see an utter lack of transparency from you and this administration. We've written numerous letters¹⁵¹⁶¹⁷¹⁸ that have yet to receive adequate or any response. You also failed to meet legal requirements to provide an operating plan at the level of detail required by section 1113 and in adherence to section 1101 of the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025, despite having more than 45 days to do so. This must change immediately.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We look forward to seeing actions from the Department that align to the timely and effective implementation of the requirements of federal law. We also look forward to responses to our letters and your testimony before committees later this year.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
Vice Chair
Senate Committee on
Appropriations



Tammy Baldwin
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related
Agencies



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Committee on
Appropriations

⁷ <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-updates-guidance-covid-19-funding>

⁸ <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/2025-04/Letter%20to%20State%20Chiefs%20ESF%20Funding%2003.28.25.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.k12dive.com/news/education-department-ordered-to-restore-covid-spending-extensions-schools-ESSER-lawsuit/747423/>

¹⁰ [https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-cuts-over-600-million-divisive-teacher-training-grants#:~:text=U.S.%20Department%20of%20Education%20Cuts%20Over%20\\$600%20Million%20in%20Divisive%20Teacher%20Training%20Grants,-U.S.%20Department%20of&text=The%20U.S.%20Department%20of%20Education,education%20agencies%20on%20divisive%20ideologies.](https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-cuts-over-600-million-divisive-teacher-training-grants#:~:text=U.S.%20Department%20of%20Education%20Cuts%20Over%20$600%20Million%20in%20Divisive%20Teacher%20Training%20Grants,-U.S.%20Department%20of&text=The%20U.S.%20Department%20of%20Education,education%20agencies%20on%20divisive%20ideologies.)

¹¹ <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-cancels-divisive-and-wasteful-grants-under-comprehensive-centers-program>

¹² <https://x.com/DOGE/status/1889113011282907434>

¹³ <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/ed-requires-k-12-school-districts-certify-compliance-title-vi-and-students-v-harvard-condition-of-receiving-federal-financial-assistance>

¹⁴ <https://marylandmatters.org/2025/04/24/federal-judge-in-maryland-blocks-plan-by-trump-administration-to-ban-dei-in-schools/>

¹⁵ https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_oversight_letter_to_secretary_mcmahon_re_education_department layoffs.pdf

¹⁶ https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_oversight_letter_to_ed_re_doge_cuts_to_important_education_research.pdf

¹⁷ https://www.baldwin.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/letter_to_secretary_mcmahon_on_teacher_training_grants.pdf

¹⁸ https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/250317_letter_to_ed_final_re_rifs.pdf