

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 2, 2026

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

Dear Secretary McMahon:

We write to express our strong opposition to the Trump Administration’s continued efforts to undermine the rights of English learners, including through the formal dissolution of the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) at the U.S. Department of Education (the Department). This dissolution follows the unprecedented use of Interagency Agreements (IAAs) to transfer significant programmatic responsibilities of the Secretary of Education under authorization and appropriations laws to the Department of Labor (DOL), including those under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). We are deeply concerned that these actions combined with significant workforce reductions implemented by the Department will impact the Department’s capacity to fulfill its statutory responsibilities under these laws and Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act*, which will have devastating and lasting consequences for the education of more than five million English learner students nationwide.

Today, English learners make up one in ten elementary and secondary public school students – of which a majority are U.S. citizens. These students attend school in every state—in city, suburban, town, and rural classrooms alike. English learners, as with all public school students, have the legal and moral right to access a meaningful, rigorous, and high-quality education.

Sections 209 and 216 of the *Department of Education Organization Act* require the establishment of OELA, whose Director “shall report directly to the Secretary [of Education]” (20 U.S.C. 3420). OELA is charged not only with supporting implementation of Title III of the ESEA, but also with providing national leadership so that English learners and immigrant students attain English proficiency and academic success. OELA has historically served as the Department’s central hub of expertise on English learner education, housing career staff with deep knowledge of Title III implementation, language acquisition, and the unique needs of English learners.

On February 13, the Department notified Congress of its plan to dissolve OELA and reassign its functions. Without a dedicated office and specialized team to coordinate this work, the administration of programs risks becoming fragmented, inconsistent, and less responsive to the needs of states, school districts, and students. Distributing OELA’s functions across multiple offices and to another agency with limited experience with these statutory responsibilities creates a significant risk of funding disruptions, inefficiencies, gaps in oversight, and diminished quality of technical assistance.

Dissolving OELA also threatens the nation's capacity to prepare and sustain the multilingual educator workforce required to serve English learners effectively. State and educator preparation programs rely on OELA-administered grants, technical assistance, and policy guidance to strengthen bilingual teacher preparation pathways, support multilingual teacher candidates, and expand dual-language programs. At a time when school districts across the country face persistent shortages of multilingual educators, weakening federal infrastructure further destabilizes efforts to recruit, prepare, and retain teachers equipped to support multilingual learners.

Federal law is not optional. School districts and states are obligated to serve English learners under Title III-A of ESEA, and to protect them from discrimination under Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*. The Department remains statutorily responsible for administering the programs that Congress has assigned to OELA through multiple authorization and appropriations laws, including (1) Title III, Part A, English Language Acquisition Program, (2) Native American and Alaska Native Children in Schools (NAM), (3) National Professional Development (NPD), and (4) the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA). States depend heavily on consistent, high-quality technical assistance from the OELA to implement and continuously improve their English learner programs, effectively use Title III funds, support educators, and meet federal requirements. Research consistently demonstrates that multilingual learners experience stronger academic outcomes, greater school connectedness, and increased access to opportunity when schools are adequately staffed with educators prepared to support language development and multilingual instruction.

Dissolving OELA and rolling back monitoring and guidance does not relieve states of those obligations—it simply eliminates the federal support to meet those obligations. At the same time, the Administration has disrupted critical support systems for schools and states by freezing English learner funding and rescinding longstanding civil rights guidance that districts rely upon to serve multilingual learners lawfully and effectively. These actions have also contributed to heightened fear and instability among immigrant-origin students and families, including through the revocation of prior guidance designating schools as protected areas from immigration enforcement. Taken together, these actions weaken the federal government's ability to meet its statutory obligations to English learners and undermine the support systems states and school districts depend upon to serve them.

Even as the Department weakens institutional support for English learners, federal law is clear: all students acquiring English as a second language retain the right to a meaningful educational access and support. Therefore, we request a written response answering these questions within 30 days:

1. Will the Department publicly release a transition and implementation plan detailing how statutory responsibilities formerly administered through OELA will be maintained, monitored, and evaluated moving forward?
2. Which specific offices and staff will be responsible for administering each program previously administered by OELA, including the National Clearinghouse for English

Language Acquisition (NCELA)? Who will serve as the primary point of contact for current grantees and states?

3. How will the Department ensure the provision of consistent, high-quality technical assistance to states in the absence of a centralized office staffed with subject-matter experts in English learner education? How will the Department make sure that the staff providing technical assistance will have necessary subject-matter expertise?
4. What steps has the Department taken to ensure that any office or agency assuming these responsibilities will comply with all statutory requirements and faithfully carry out the intent of Congress in serving English learners? To that end, please specify any compliance or enforcement actions that the Department (including OCR) has taken since January 20, 2025, to ensure that English learners are being appropriately served.
5. Please share the findings of your analysis of the capacity of DOL to effectively carry out activities assigned to it under the IAA with the Department with respect to ESEA requirements related to and programs for English learners.
6. What role will DOL play in administering Title III programs, and what is the timeline for the transfer in program administration to DOL? Please document the cost to taxpayers for carrying out interagency agreements that shift administration of Title III programs from OELA and the Department to DOL. How many staff from the Department will be detailed to the DOL related to Title III ESEA program administration? How has the Department considered the burden of the planned change of grant and payment systems on state and local education systems, which it recently acknowledged when it decided to continue to distribute July 1 formula funds through the Department's G5 system?
7. How and when will the Department publicly communicate its plan for maintaining statutorily required functions and technical assistance without disruption?

Every child deserves access to a high-quality education and an opportunity to succeed, regardless of the language they speak at home. Multilingual learners are not a marginal population; they are a vital part of the nation's schools, workforce, economy, and civic future. Congress established OELA to ensure that English learners receive coordinated federal leadership, oversight, and support. Dissolving specialized infrastructure does not eliminate the Department's legal obligations to multilingual learners; it weakens the federal government's capacity to fulfill them. At a moment when states and school systems are working to improve student outcomes that have fallen over the past decade, strengthen multilingual education and address persistent educator shortages, the Department should be focused on expanding its expertise and support for English learners, not dismantling it.

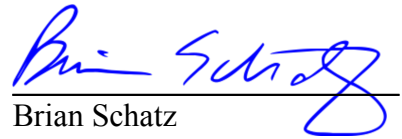
Sincerely,



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator




Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



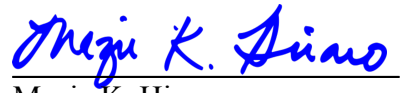
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



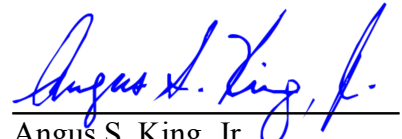
John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



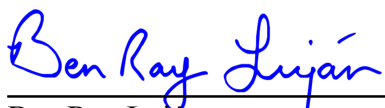
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



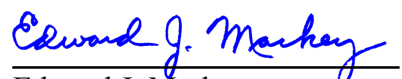
Andy Kim
United States Senator



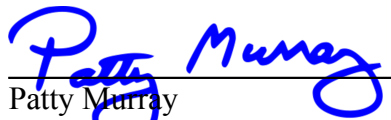
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator





Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator




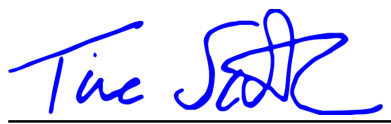
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator

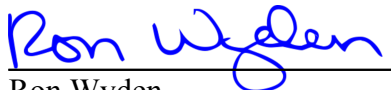

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator


Bernard Sanders
United States Senator


Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator


Tina Smith
United States Senator


Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator


Ron Wyden
United States Senator