

May 24, 2022

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health, and Human Services, and Education;
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health, and Human Services, and Education
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor,
and Pensions; Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human
Services, and Education
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health, and Human Services, and Education
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair DeLauro, Chair Murray, Ranking Member Cole, and Ranking Member Blunt,

We, the undersigned 123 organizations, are writing to urge you to include \$2 billion in Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) appropriations funding for Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—the federal formula grant program intended to support English learners (ELs) in every state and territory. Grants are based on each state’s share of EL students and recent immigrant student population. ELs make up 10% of K-12 public school students in the U.S. and are one of the fastest-growing student populations. The number of ELs in the U.S. grew 35% between the fall 2000 and fall of 2019.ⁱ As of 2019, there were [5.1 million English learners](#) enrolled in public schools.ⁱⁱ While increasing numbers of late-entrant students—students with interrupted education—and refugee children are enrolling in schools, it is important to note that most EL students are U.S.-born citizens.

Research shows that ELs perform better when they have qualified teachers and high-quality learning materials (including digital curriculum), and their schools have adequate financial resources. Evidence indicates that these factors contribute to reducing opportunity gaps (e.g., low graduation rates, low college attendance rates, and low enrollment in advanced placement classes). Despite the evidence, however, these resources are drastically lacking for English learners.

While federal funding to support the education of ELs was first established in 1968 through the Bilingual Education Act, which later evolved into Title III in the 2002 reauthorization of the ESEA, funding has failed to keep up with the nation’s EL population growth. As noted above, while the number of ELs has grown by 35% between 2000-2019, Title III funding has been relatively flat since the inception of the program in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002, increasing only 25% between FY2002 and FY2022 (from \$664 million to \$831 million). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015—authorized Title III funding to increase to \$884 million by 2020. The most recent FY22 Omnibus Appropriations Bill provided \$831 million for Title III, the highest funding level appropriated to date, but still short of ESSA’s authorized amount, and far short of keeping up with growth in the EL population. Even if Congress had funded Title III at the authorized level of \$884 million, this would provide schools with only \$173 per pupil for the 5.1 million ELs enrolled in U.S. public schools. Even more concerning is that when adjusting

for inflation, Title III funding has decreased by 12.8% since 2008.ⁱⁱⁱ In FY08, Title III was funded at \$700 million, which is roughly \$953 million in 2022 when adjusted for inflation.

The lack of adequate Title III funding in the federal budget has a disproportionate impact on students of color, low-income students, immigrant families, and students with disabilities. Not only has the EL population grown, but it is increasingly more linguistically and culturally diverse as suburban, exurban, and rural districts have seen dramatic increases in their EL populations. While the majority of EL students are Latino (78%), 11% are Asian and 7% are White.^{iv} States list over 50 commonly spoken languages, including Chinese, Arabic, and Vietnamese.^v Approximately 14% ([714,400](#)) are also identified as students with disabilities.^{vi}

Underinvestment in ELs has contributed to the persistence of wide opportunity gaps. According to the 2019 National Assessment of Education Progress, only 16 percent of fourth grade ELs scored at or above the proficient level in math and only 10 percent were at or above proficient in reading. ELs in eighth grade, and at every level, lagged far behind their non-EL peers on these measures of academic achievement. While one-third of non-ELs were proficient in math at grade 8, only 5 percent of eighth grade ELs met these mastery benchmarks. In addition, the Office of English Language Acquisition reports that while 85 percent of students nationwide graduated from high school on time in 2018, the rate was only 68 percent for ELs. The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated these opportunity gaps.

In order to maximize support for ELs to reach their potential and be successful contributors to the U.S. economy, ELs need additional targeted resources, ranging from tutoring, summer and afterschool programs, multilingual language development services to social and emotional support for challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. Additionally, the nation's growing EL student population needs a robust teacher workforce equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to teach them, however, 31 states across the country are experiencing shortages of EL teachers. In order to improve academic progress and meet the social and emotional needs of EL students, we make the following recommendations for Congress:

Appropriate \$2 billion for Title III in the FY23 federal budget. Funding Title III at this level would increase school supports for ELs to \$400/per pupil, as well as providing resources in other key areas, including:

- \$100 million to create a discretionary grant program for the development and adoption of native language assessments to leverage the full repertoire of linguistic, cultural, and cognitive resources that ELs bring to school and to better inform equitable and higher-level instruction.
- Support for more teachers to attain their English Language Development or Bilingual certification and professional development for teachers of ELs through the National Professional Development program within Title III.
- Culturally and linguistically responsive engagement and communication with EL families.
- Community and family initiatives to support summer and after-school academic and social programs for English learners.
- Sustainable innovative programs that support bilingual and dual language education, and leverage the unique linguistic, cultural, and cognitive capital of ELs to promote higher levels of academic and socio-emotional outcomes.

The undersigned organizations respectfully urge you to consider the recommendations outlined above and support \$2 billion for Title III in FY23. We are committed to supporting English learners—our nation’s future—to ensure that they have access to a high-quality education. Our prosperity as a nation beyond the pandemic depends on their success. Should you have any questions, please contact Amalia Chamorro, Director of the Education Policy Project, UnidosUS at achamorro@unidosus.org.

National Organizations

ACTFL
All4Ed
American Federation of Teachers
American Translators Association
Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC)
Association of Language Companies
Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS)
Center for Applied Linguistics
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Collaborative for Student Success
Education Policy Program at New America
Education Reform Now
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities
English Learners Success Forum
Green Dot Public Schools National
Hispanic Federation
IDRA
Japanese American Citizens League
Joint National Committee for Languages
KIPP
Latinos for Education
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Learning Heroes
Migrant Legal Action Program
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
National Association of English Learner Program Administrators (NAELPA)
National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)
National Center for Families Learning
National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD)
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
National Education Association
National Parents Union
National Summer Learning Association
National Urban League
Our Turn
SchoolHouse Connection
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Teach For America
Teach Plus

TESOL International Association
The Education Trust
The National Parents Union
TNTF
UnidosUS

State Organizations

Alabama

¡HICA! Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama

Arizona

Alianto Education Fund
ALL In Education
Amistades, Inc.
Arizona Department of Education
Arizona School Boards Association
Friendly House Inc.

California

Amethod Public Schools
Association of Mexican American Educators, Inc.
CABE--California Association for Bilingual Education
Californians Together
CATESOL
Center for Equity for English Learners, Loyola Marymount University
Center for Powerful Public Schools
CFT--A Union of Educators and Classified Professionals
Early Edge California
Eastmont Community Center
El Sol Academy
Families In Schools
Great Public Schools Now
KIPP SoCal Public Schools
La Maestra Family Clinic, Inc.
Para Los Niños
Parent Institute for Quality Education
Parent Organization Network
PUENTE Learning Center
SEAL (Sobrato Early Academic Language)
Watts/Century Latino Organization

Colorado

Mi Casa Resource Center

Florida

Centro Campesino Farmworker Center, Inc. (CCFC)
Enterprising Latinas, Inc.

Hispanic Services Council, Inc.
Hispanic Unity of Florida
Latino Leadership, Inc.
Mexican American Council

Illinois

Acero Schools of Chicago
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council
Center for Changing Lives
Centro Romero
Illinois Migrant Council
Instituto del Progreso Latino
Northwest Side Housing Center

Iowa

Centro Latino of Iowa

Kansas

El Centro, Inc.

Massachusetts

Greater Lawrence Community Action Council
Massachusetts Advocates for Children

Michigan

El Concilio/Hispanic American Council Inc
Hispanic Center of Western Michigan
Southwest Economic Solutions

Minnesota

CLUES- Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio

Missouri

Council of Administrators of Special Education

New York

Dominico-American Society of Queens, Inc.
EduColor
Ibero-American Action League
The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families

North Carolina

El Centro Hispano, Inc.

Ohio

El Centro de Servicios Sociales
Ohio Hispanic Coalition

Pennsylvania

Centro Hispano Daniel Torres Inc.
Concilio de Organizaciones Hispanas (El Concilio)
Education Law Center PA
I-LEAD Inc.
Latino Community Center

Tennessee

Conexión Américas

Texas

Academia Cuauhtli
Easterseals North & Central Texas
Every Texan
La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)
MULTICULTURAL FAMILY CENTER
Northside American Federation of Teachers
Project Vida
Texas State Teachers Association
The Education Trust in Texas

Virginia

EDGE Consulting Partners
Edu-Futuro
Feminist Majority Foundation

Washington

El Centro de la Raza

Wisconsin

La Causa, Inc.

Puerto Rico

One Stop Career Center of PR Inc.

ⁱ National Center for Education Statistics, Table 204.20, [English learner \(EL\) students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, by state: Selected years, fall 2000 through fall 2019](#) (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

ⁱⁱ National Center for Education Statistics, Table 204.20, [English learner \(EL\) students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, by state: Selected years, fall 2000 through fall 2019](#) (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

ⁱⁱⁱ UnidosUS calculation based on Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI inflation calculator and U.S. Department of Education and NCES data.

^{iv} National Center for Education Statistics, English Learners in Public Schools (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

^v National Center for Education Statistics, English Learners in Public Schools (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

^{vi} U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, English Learners: English Learners with Disabilities (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2021).