

October 26, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, and Leader McCarthy:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to urge you to fund Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) at no less than \$1 billion for Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23), which is the funding level included in the House Appropriations bill.

Title III is 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 2019.¹ As of 2019, there were [5.1 million English learners](#) enrolled in public schools.² 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, 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, these resources are drastically lacking for English learners.

Title III funding has been relatively flat, increasing only 25% between FY2002 and FY2022 (from \$664 million to \$831 million). While the FY22 Omnibus Appropriations Bill provided the highest funding level appropriated to date, it still falls short of keeping up with growth in the EL population. When adjusting for inflation, Title III funding has decreased by 12.8% since 2008.³

The lack of adequate Title III funding has a disproportionate impact on students of color, low-income students, immigrant families, and students with disabilities. The EL population has especially grown in suburban, exurban, and rural districts. While most EL students are Latino (78%), 11% are Asian and 7% are White.⁴ States list over 50 commonly spoken languages, including Chinese, Arabic, and Vietnamese.⁵ Approximately 14% ([714,400](#)) ELs are also identified as students with disabilities.⁶

Underinvestment in ELs has contributed to the persistence of wide opportunity gaps. According to the 2022 National Assessment of Education Progress, only 14% of fourth grade ELs scored at or above the proficient level in math compared to the national average of 29%, and only 10% were at or above proficient in reading compared to the national average of 32%. ELs across all grades lag far behind their non-EL peers on these measures of academic achievement. In addition, the Office of English Language

Acquisition reports that while 85% of students nationwide graduated from high school on time in 2018, the rate was only 68% for ELs. The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated these opportunity gaps.

To maximize support for ELs to reach their full potential, ELs need additional targeted resources, such as tutoring, summer and afterschool programs, and multilingual language development services to address challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. ELs also need a robust teacher workforce equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to teach them at a time when states across the country are experiencing shortages of EL teachers. To improve education outcomes for ELs, we urge Congress to **appropriate at least \$1 billion for Title III in the appropriations package**. Funding at this level would modestly increase school supports for ELs to \$200/per pupil and provide other resources, 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 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 89 undersigned organizations respectfully urge you to consider the recommendations outlined above and support at least \$1 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
Afterschool Alliance
All4Ed
American Federation of Teachers
American Translators Association
ASPIRA
Association of Language Companies
Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS)
Center for Applied Linguistics
Council of Administrators of Special Education
EDGE Consulting Partners
Education Reform Now
Green Dot Public Schools
Hispanic Federation
IDRA
Japanese American Citizens League
Joint National Committee for Languages

Latinos for Education
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Migrant Legal Action Program
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council for Languages and International Studies
National Education Association
National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association
National Parents Union
National Urban League
New America's Education Policy Program
Our Turn
Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE)
SchoolHouse Connection
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Teach Plus
The Education Trust
TNTF
UnidosUS

State Organizations:

Alabama

iHICA! Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama

Arizona

ALL In Education
Arizona Department of Education
Friendly House Inc.

California

California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE)
Center for Equity for English Learners, Loyola Marymount University
Center for Powerful Public Schools
El Sol Academy
Families In Schools
Para Los Ninos
Parent Organization Network
PUENTE Learning Center
Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL)

Florida

Hispanic Services Council, Inc.
Hispanic Unity of Florida

Hawaii

Hawai'i Workers Center
Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights
Hawai'i Scholars for Education and Social Justice

Hawai'i State Department of Health
Hawai'i TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages)
Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Hawaii Children's Action Network Speaks!
Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center
Hep Free Hawaii
Maui County Dept. of Housing & Human Concerns - Immigrant Services Division
Pacific Gateway Center
Parents and Children Together
The Legal Clinic Hawaii for Immigrant Justice
Tonga Consular Agency

Illinois

Brighton Park Neighborhood Council
Instituto del Progreso Latino
Northwest Side Housing Center

Kansas

El Centro, Inc.

Massachusetts

Greater Lawrence Community Action Council

Michigan

El Concilio/Hispanic American Council Inc.
Hispanic Center of Western Michigan

New York

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

Pennsylvania

Education Law Center Pennsylvania
I-Lead Inc.
Latino Community Center

Texas

Breakthrough Central Texas
Every Texan
La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)
MULTICULTURAL FAMILY CENTER
Northside AFT #3216
Texas State Teachers Association
The Education Trust in Texas

Virginia

Edu-Futuro

Wisconsin

La Causa, Inc.

Puerto Rico

One Stop Career Center of PR, Inc.

¹ 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).

² 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).

³ UnidosUS calculation based on Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI inflation calculator and U.S. Department of Education and NCES data.

⁴ National Center for Education Statistics, English Learners in Public Schools (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

⁵ National Center for Education Statistics, English Learners in Public Schools (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

⁶ U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, English Learners: English Learners with Disabilities (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2021).