

May 13, 2026

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Secretary McMahon:

On behalf of the undersigned members of the National English Learner Roundtable and partner organizations, we write to express our strong opposition to the formal dissolution of the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) in the U.S. Department of Education (“the Department”). We are deeply concerned that this action will have lasting negative consequences for the education of our nation’s more than five million English learner students.¹ We request clear and timely information outlining how the Department will continue to meet its statutory obligations to English learners in the absence of a dedicated office and experienced career staff. Their specialized knowledge and technical expertise supports states in implementing effective, evidence-based practices to help these students develop English proficiency and meet the same academic standards as their peers.

Today, English learners make up one in ten of all K–12 public school students. The majority of these students are U.S.-born citizens,² and most will live, work, and contribute to the nation’s prosperity into adulthood. The extent to which we succeed or fail to provide them with access to a high-quality education will have far-reaching implications for our society, workforce and economy.

Congress’s longstanding commitment to English learners is evident in the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act and its continued investment in programs authorized under Title III. Even without a standalone OELA, the Department remains responsible for administering the Title III, Part A, English Language Acquisition program, which provides formula grants to all 50 states to help them improve English language instruction and academic outcomes for English learners. This program will be relocated to the Division of State Support and Accountability (SSA). The Department is also statutorily required to effectively administer the following Title III programs, which you have also decided to move to other offices:

- **Native American and Alaska Native Children in Schools (NAM)** — grants for the language development and academic achievement of Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian English learners. This program is moving to the Office of Indian Education.
- **National Professional Development (NPD)** — supports institutions of higher education and partnerships to prepare and strengthen the pipeline of bilingual and English learner educators. This program is moving to the Office of Effective Educator Development Programs.

¹ Xigrd Soto-Boykin et al., “Federal Funding to Support the Learning and Success of Multilingual Students,” The Children’s Equity Project, September 2025, <https://cep.asu.edu/sites/g/files/litvpz916/files/2025-09/Protecting%20Federal%20Funding%20to%20Support%20English%20Learners%20%284%29.pdf#page=10>.

² Villegas, Leslie. 2023. Review of Accountability for Long-Term English Learners. KAPPAN. PDK International. September 25, 2023. <https://kappanonline.org/accountability-for-english-learners-villegas/>.

- **The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA)** —central resource hub for data, research and technical assistance on English learner education for states, school districts, educators and other stakeholders. The notification to Congress did not address which office would now oversee this program.

The Department’s decision to dissolve OELA raises serious concerns about its ability to effectively carry out these responsibilities. 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. Without a dedicated office and specialized team to coordinate this work, the administration of these programs risks becoming fragmented, inconsistent, and less responsive to the needs of states and school districts. Distributing OELA’s functions across multiple offices creates a significant risk of inefficiencies, gaps in oversight, and diminished quality of technical assistance.

States depend heavily on consistent, high-quality technical assistance from the Department to implement and continuously improve their English learner programs, effectively use Title III funds, support educators, and meet federal requirements. Ultimately, when states do not receive the support they need, it is English learners who bear the consequences. Any breakdown in technical assistance or program oversight risks weakening the quality of instruction these students receive.

The closure of OELA is compounded by a series of prior actions the Department has taken, under your leadership, affecting English learners. These include the dismantling of OELA through a reduction in force, the freezing of English learner funding to states for 25 days, and the rescission of federal guidance on schools’ civil rights obligations to English learners. Each of these actions has reduced the Department’s capacity to provide leadership, oversight and technical assistance, while increasing disruption and uncertainty for states and school districts. These concerns are further exacerbated by the Department’s interagency agreement transferring the management of many K-12 education programs, including Title III, to the U.S. Department of Labor.

The decision to dissolve OELA contradicts the Administration’s own [Executive Order 14224](#) designating English as the official language of the United States. While the Administration claims to prioritize helping students gain English proficiency, it has simultaneously dismantled the only office within the U.S. Department of Education specifically charged with supporting ELs to gain English proficiency and succeed in school, undermining these critical goals.

To ensure that the Department continues to meet its legal obligations and effectively serve English learners, we request written responses to the following questions:

- Which specific offices and staff will be responsible for administering each of the Title III programs, including the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA), following the dissolution of OELA? Who will serve as the primary point of contact for states?
- How will the Department ensure the provision of consistent, high-quality technical assistance to states in the absence of a centralized office with subject-matter expertise in English learner education?
- What guarantees has the Department established 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 has taken since January 20, 2025, to ensure that English learners are being appropriately served.

- Please describe how and on what timeline the Department will publicly communicate its plan for maintaining statutorily required functions and technical assistance without disruption.

We respectfully request a written response to this letter no later than 30 days from receipt. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Former OELA Directors:

- Kathleen Leos, Former Assistant Deputy Secretary and Director of the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), 2002-2007, George W. Bush Administration
- Jose Viana, Former Assistant Deputy Secretary and Director of the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), 2017-2019, Donald Trump Administration
- Montserrat Garibay, Former Assistant Deputy Secretary and Director of the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), 2023-2025, Joe Biden Administration

National Organizations:

- ACTFL
- All4Ed
- American Atheists
- American Civil Liberties Union
- American Federation of Teachers
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC
- Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents
- Center for Applied Linguistics
- Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
- Coalition on Human Needs
- EdTrust
- Educated We Stand
- English Learner Initiative, PreK–12 Education, Education & Work, New America
- Ensemble Learning
- Feminist Majority Foundation
- Hispanic Federation
- IDRA
- Internationals Network
- Joint National Committee for Languages
- LatinoJustice PRLDEF
- League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
- MASBA: School Board Members for Latino Equity
- Migrant Legal Action Program

- NAELPA - National Association of English Learner Program Administrators
- NAJIT
- National Association for Bilingual Education
- National Center for Learning Disabilities
- National Coalition for Language Access
- National Council for Languages and International Studies
- National Education Association
- National Newcomer Network
- National Parents Union
- PFLAG National
- Simplify Language
- Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
- TESOL International Association
- The Center for Learner Equity
- The Education Neuroscience Foundation
- The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
- The Sikh Coalition
- UnidosUS

State-Based Organizations:

Alabama:

- HICA - Hispanic and Immigrant Center of Alabama

Arizona:

- Arizona Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

California:

- Building Skills Partnership (BSP)
- Californians Together
- Canal Alliance
- Chinese for Affirmative Action
- El Sol Science and Arts Academy
- Families In Schools (FIS)
- MAAC
- PUENTE Learning Center

Colorado:

- Colorado Center on Law and Policy
- Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition
- Colorado Language Access Coalition
- CSPC

- Hispanic Affairs Project
- La Plaza of Palisade
- Mile High Multilingual Service
- Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning
- El Corazon LLC

Florida:

- United Teachers of Dade/AFT1974

Illinois:

- Advance Illinois
- Latino Policy Forum

Kansas:

- El Centro, Inc.

Massachusetts:

- East Boston Community Council

Michigan:

- MITESOL

Missouri:

- Mattie Rhodes Center

New Jersey:

- AAPI NJ

New Mexico:

- Dual Language Education of New Mexico

New York:

- Dominico-American Society of Queens

North Carolina:

- El Centro Hispano, Inc
- Latin American Coalition

Ohio:

- El Centro de Servicios Sociales, Inc

Pennsylvania:

- Congreso de Latinos Unidos

Rhode Island:

- Rhode Island Teachers of English Language Learners (RITELL)

Tennessee:

- Conexion Americas
- API Tennessee

Texas:

- Access Education RRISD
- Asian Texans for Justice
- Latino Texas Policy Center
- Our Schools Our Democracy
- Students Engaged in Advancing Texas (SEAT)
- Texas Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents
- Texas State Teachers Association

Wisconsin:

- WITESOL

Multi-state Organizations:

- Dakota TESOL
- MIDTESOL
- Multistate Association for Bilingual Education-Northeast, Inc

Puerto Rico:

- PRTESOL