

Senator Tammy Baldwin
Chair, LHHS Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Robert Aderholt
Chair, LHHS Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member, LHHS Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, LHHS Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Baldwin, Ranking Member Capito, Chair Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We, the undersigned # organizations, write to urge you to include \$2 billion for the English Language Acquisition program, authorized by Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), without cutting funding for other education programs, in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations legislation. Title III provides English learner (EL) students access to the resources they need to attain English language proficiency and meet the same challenging academic standards that their non-EL peers must meet. Five million EL students are enrolled in our public schools, representing one in ten of all K-12 public school students.¹ It is critical that Congress make a robust investment in the education of EL students to ensure the success of our nation.

A large body of evidence shows that providing EL students with an adequate education requires additional per-pupil funding compared to non-EL students.² However, funding for Title III has not kept pace with the growing EL student population. For example, the number of EL students grew by 11 percent from 2010 to 2020 but Title III appropriations only increased by 5 percent during that same timeframe.³ Title III was level funded at \$890 million in FY 2024, only providing an average of \$173 per EL student. Without increases in funding for Title III, per pupil funding will continue to decrease due to the growing numbers of EL students and inflationary pressures. Appropriating \$2 billion for Title III will provide a more adequate average of \$400 per EL student.

Insufficient funding for Title III has contributed to the persistence of wide academic achievement gaps. The results of the 2022 National Assessment of Education Progress showed that only 15 percent of EL students scored proficient or above in 4th grade math compared to 40 percent of their non-EL peers. Similarly, only 4 percent of EL students scored proficient or above in 8th grade math compared to 28 percent of native English speakers.⁴ While it is anticipated that EL

¹ Office of English Language Acquisition. (2022, August 01). English Learners: Demographic Trends. National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition. <https://ncela.ed.gov/resources/fact-sheet-english-learners-demographic-trends-august-2022-1>

² Office of English Language Acquisition. (2024, January 25). English Learner Educational Experiences and Opportunities: A Report Using Federal Datasets. National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition. <https://ncela.ed.gov/resources/report-english-learner-educational-experiences-and-opportunities-a-report-using-federal-0>

³ National Center for Education Statistics. (2023, May). English Learners in Public Schools. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf/english-learners>

⁴ National Assessment of Educational Progress. (2022). <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>

students may trail their peers until they achieve English language proficiency, these figures highlight the significant gap they must overcome to reach their peers' level.

The EL student population is diverse and brings significant assets to the classroom. However, they face significant barriers in their educational journey. Unfortunately, data shows that EL students are more likely to attend schools with less experienced teachers. EL students are also underrepresented in advanced courses and gifted and talented programs. They are also more likely to be retained in their grade level.⁵

Increased federal investments to support this student population can help address these challenges. Schools in all fifty states rely on Title III funds to help EL students reach their full potential. Title III funds enable them to provide EL students with targeted resources, including enhanced language instruction and community engagement programming. Funds also provide for professional development for teachers and staff working with EL students.

The undersigned organizations respectfully urge you to include \$2 billion for Title III in FY 2025, without cutting funding for other education programs. We are committed to supporting our nation's more than five million EL students to ensure that they have access to a high-quality education. Our prosperity as a nation depends on their success.⁶ Should you have any questions, please contact Lina Lenis, K-12 Policy Analyst, Education Policy Project, UnidosUS at Llenis@unidosus.org.

⁵ Office of English Language Acquisition. (2024, January 25). English Learner Educational Experiences and Opportunities: A Report Using Federal Datasets. National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition. <https://ncela.ed.gov/resources/report-english-learner-educational-experiences-and-opportunities-a-report-using-federal-0>

⁶ Office of English Language Acquisition. (2024, January 25). English Learner Educational Experiences and Opportunities: A Report Using Federal Datasets. National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition. <https://ncela.ed.gov/resources/report-english-learner-educational-experiences-and-opportunities-a-report-using-federal-0>