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June 26, 2025

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

Dear Secretary McMahon,

Thank you again for testifying at the June 4, 2025, Committee on Education and Workforce hearing titled "Examining the Policies and Priorities of the Department of Education." Enclosed are additional questions submitted by Committee members following the hearing. Please provide a written response no later than July 17, 2025, for inclusion in the hearing record. Responses should be sent to Eli Mitchell (eli.mitchell@mail.house.gov) of the Committee staff; he can also be contacted at (202) 225-6558.

We appreciate your contribution to the work of the Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tim Walberg".

Tim Walberg
Chairman

Representative Elise Stefanik (R-NY)

Rural students graduate from high school at a higher rate than their peers but are less likely than other demographic groups to attend training, two- or four-year colleges after graduation. If they do enroll in postsecondary opportunities, they are more likely to drop out without completing their course of training or study. The Rural Postsecondary and Economic Development grants, funded in FIPSE, were created by myself, former Chairman Blunt, and current Chairwoman Collins to help even out that gap and support rural students in achieving the training and education that allows them to achieve their dreams and contribute to rural economies. In my Congressional district in Upstate New York and the North Country, CFES Brilliant Pathways used an RPED award to train college students from rural communities in Upstate New York as mentors, then sent them back to their hometown high schools to talk with their peers about job opportunities and continuing their education after high school graduation. They trained high school teachers in rural schools to be able to walk students through college and career options, since many rural schools don't have a dedicated college and career advisor. They also created industry partnerships through the North Country to serve as college and career readiness advisors and mentors. These activities are creating new options for students - and potential new employees for businesses - across rural Upstate New York. I was disappointed to see that the President's Budget Request did not include funding for the RPED grants.

1. Congress provided funding in the FY 2025 appropriations bill for another round of RPED grants.
 - a) Can you tell me when the RFP for those funds will be released? Prior administrations only gave thinly staffed rural organizations 30 days from issuing the RFP to the grant application deadline.

Representative Julia Letlow (R-LA)

1. The Education Innovation and Research (EIR) grant program is a longstanding, bipartisan initiative aimed at supporting innovative approaches to improving student outcomes, particularly for high-need populations. The program emphasizes the development, implementation, and scaling of evidence-based strategies to address persistent challenges in education. For instance, the Louisiana Department of Education is currently engaged in an EIR project focused on micro-credentialing in pre-engineering and computer science, while LSU is contributing to a project exploring the integration of programming and mathematics.

Secretary McMahon, could you share any information on how the Department plans to approach the EIR program this year, including any anticipated priorities or areas of focus? Additionally, how does the Department intend to balance setting programmatic priorities with maintaining flexibility for the field to propose innovative ideas?

2. Secretary McMahon, how much Congressionally appropriated funding remains available for the Mental Health Service Professionals (MHSP) Demonstration Grant Program and the School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program? Does the Department plan to announce new application opportunities for either or both programs using FY25 funding, and are there any anticipated priorities or areas of focus the Department expects to emphasize in upcoming competitions?

Representative Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)

1. **Institute of Education Sciences:** The Trump Administration has canceled more than \$900 million in Institute of Education Sciences (IES) grant funding and reduced IES staff from 175 to fewer than 20 employees.
 - a. How will IES meet its statutory obligations under the Education Sciences Reform Act without sufficient funding or staff capacity?
 - b. How will IES meet its statutory obligations under the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Authorization Act to administer the NAEP without sufficient funding or staff capacity?
2. **K-12 Simplified Funding Program:** You have repeatedly stated that students and schools will not lose any federal funding in the process of dismantling the Department of Education and streamlining funding streams; however, the proposed K-12 Simplified Funding Program would consolidate 18 grants totaling \$6.5 billion in current funding into one funding stream totaling \$2 billion.
 - a. What is the justification for cutting these grant programs by a collective \$4.5 billion?
 - b. How will these funds be distributed to states? Which states will lose the most federal funding under the new grant program?
3. **School Choice and Private School Accountability:** You have indicated that “school choice” is going to be one of your priorities during your tenure as Secretary of Education.
 - a. Are private schools required under federal law to abide by the Individuals with Disabilities Act?
 - b. If federal funding were to be re-directed toward private school vouchers, how would the Department protect students with disabilities against discrimination by private schools? What enforcement mechanism, if any, would the Department use to make sure these students have the right to a free appropriate public education?
 - c. What would be the repercussions in rural districts that stand to lose funding but have no options other than public schools?
4. **TRIO:** The FY2026 budget request proposes eliminating TRIO and GEAR UP programs, which provide critical supports for students from underrepresented and low-income backgrounds to attend and succeed in higher education, claiming that both programs have “[not met \[their\] performance measures for a number of years.](#)” TRIO currently serves more than 880,000 students, while GEAR UP serves approximately 560,000.
 - a. Which performance measures have TRIO and GEAR UP failed to meet?
 - b. How will the Department support schools and students who will be affected by this loss of funding?
 - c. Will the Department continue administering TRIO and GEAR UP funding while awaiting congressional authorizations for FY26?
 - d. Grant Award Notifications for TRIO and GEAR UP still have not been released for the 2025-2026 academic year. When will the Department release these notifications?

5. **Student Mental Health Grants:** In April, the Department cut approximately \$1 billion in federal mental health grants appropriated by Congress in the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, including both the Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant Program (MHSP) and the School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program (SBMH). One recipient of the SBMH grants was Portland Public Schools (PPS), which used these funds to provide more than 6,000 students in the district with access to school-based mental health services, resulting in significant declines in student anxiety and depression.
- What was the rationale for terminating these two grant programs? What if any actions of PPS warranted the rescission of the district's grant funds?
 - Please explain the policy and procedure for offering grantees the opportunity to request reconsideration of the Department's decision to not continue these grants. When will reconsideration be reviewed, and when will grantees receive a decision on their reconsideration?
 - Madi Biedermann, a spokesperson for the department, defended the decision to discontinue funding, saying in a [statement](#) that "under the deeply flawed priorities of the Biden Administration, grant recipients used the funding to implement race-based actions like recruiting quotas in ways that have nothing to do with mental health and could hurt the very students the grants are supposed to help." What evidence does the Department have to support this accusation?
 - Will these grants be re-bid? If so, when? Will applicants who had their grants discontinued mid-cycle be given priority?
 - What efforts will the Department make to address the disruption that has occurred as a result of these grants being revoked without warning?
6. **Literacy Instruction:** You have indicated that evidence-based literacy instruction is a funding priority for the Department; however, as a result of the mass contract cancellations and grant terminations at the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Northwest is no longer able to fulfill its Literacy Initiative Partnership with the Oregon Department of Education. This project was designed to identify best practices in early literacy so our state's young students can achieve grade-level reading proficiency. The Department cited "[wasteful and ideologically driven spending](#)" as a reason for cancelling \$350 million in funding for RELs.
- Why did the Department terminate REL Northwest's contracts and grants? What evidence does the Department have that REL Northwest's research and evaluation work was "wasteful and ideologically driven"? Will these grants and contracts be re-instated, and if so, when?
 - How will you work to support high-quality programs to develop and improve literacy skills, especially for children with learning disabilities?

Representative Summer Lee (D-PA)

1. On February 14th, the Department of Education released a Dear Colleague letter that undermines equal opportunity in education and threatens to terminate federal funding to schools and educational institutions that engage in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility policies and programming. On April 3rd, after you were confirmed, the Department demanded that states sign a certification of compliance with this guidance. I led over 40 of my colleagues in sending a letter to the acting secretary on February 27th and sending a letter to you on April 23rd urging you to rescind these threats to schools, districts, and states. We did not receive a response to either letter. Since then, three separate federal judges have placed temporary injunctions or stays on the Department's threats regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts after finding them likely unconstitutional.
 - a. Will you rescind the unconstitutional guidance documents that chill schools' lawful efforts to create safe and welcoming learning environments?
2. The Department's February 14th guidance and April 3rd certification request cite the *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* case, but as I'm sure you are aware, the Supreme Court's ruling in that case stated that "knowledge based on diverse outlooks" and "enhancing appreciation, respect, and empathy, cross-racial understanding, and breaking down stereotypes" are "commendable goals." The ruling is also clear that students can discuss race in admissions materials as long as they tie it to their potential contribution to the university.
 - a. Why didn't the Department acknowledge these parts of the *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* ruling in its guidance?
3. What steps is the Department taking to ensure its interpretation of civil rights complies with the legal precedents from the First and Fourth Circuit decisions in *Boston Parent Coalition for Academic Excellence v. School Committee of the City of Boston* and *Coalition for TJ v. Fairfax County School Board*?
4. You mentioned that the Office for Civil Rights inherited a backlog of cases from the Biden Administration, so I want to ask about your decision to manage this backlog by closing seven out of twelve regional Offices for Civil Rights, including the Office in my state of Pennsylvania, despite the fact that Congress appropriated funds for these Offices.
 - a. Can you explain specifically what you are doing that enables you to meet your statutory requirement of investigating such a high volume of cases, and how attorneys can possibly manage caseloads as high as 300, with substantially fewer resources?
5. Your testimony stated you "revised OCR's case processing manual to ensure the timely evaluation of civil rights complaints."
 - a. Do these revisions make it easier to dismiss cases without investigation?

6. The Office for Civil Rights dismissed at least seventeen complaints and investigations related to book bans and is dedicating remaining limited resources to investigating things like: schools trying to use more holistic admissions processes instead of only relying on biased test scores, schools with policies that affirm the rights of their transgender students, and states moving away from Indigenous mascots and logos that perpetuate harmful stereotypes. These investigations all seem grounded in an interpretation of Title VI that three separate federal judges have preliminary enjoined after finding they are likely unconstitutional.
 - a. Can you speak to what steps the Office for Civil Rights has taken to ensure it is not violating the orders from multiple federal courts and illegally enforcing the flawed interpretation of Title VI outlined in the February 14th Dear Colleague Letter?
7. Your Department recently announced that it was overturning the New York State Board of Regents' decision to move away from Indigenous mascots and logos.
 - a. What would you say to members of Indigenous communities who think these mascots reinforce outdated and offensive stereotypes?
 - b. Do you think overriding New York's decision about its state's mascots aligns with your commitment to education decisions being made at the local level, or does your commitment to honoring policy decisions at the local level only apply when local policies align with your political viewpoint?
8. You have consistently repeated that school choice is a priority for the Department.
 - a. Can you explain the decision to expand federal funding for charter schools while proposing to cut all federal funding for the Magnet Schools Assistance Program?
9. The Magnet Schools Assistance Program provides support for districts that are under federal desegregation mandates.
 - a. Without funding the Magnet Schools Assistance Program, how does your Department plan to support desegregation efforts in unlawfully segregated school districts?
10. Given states' Massive Resistance to desegregation following *Brown v. Board of Education*, do you believe "leaving it up to the states" and having other agencies administer federal education policy—before the modern Department of Education was established in 1980—were successful and effective strategies for expanding Black and brown student's educational opportunities?
11. Trump's budget proposal cuts the maximum Pell grant award by \$1,685 at a time when the cost of living and college tuition prices have increased. 57% of all Black undergraduate students receive Pell grant funding compared to 31% of white undergrads. Cuts to Pell eligibility will disproportionately harm Black students.

- a. What is the Department of Education doing to ensure that the proposed budget cuts will not disproportionately harm Black students?
- 12. 25% of students attending post-secondary institutions are first generation, or have parents with no post-secondary education, and over 50% of students attending post-secondary institutions have parents without a bachelor's degree. If you move forward with cutting the programs that support these students, states have already made it clear they cannot pick up the tab amidst all the other impending shortfalls they are facing from federal cuts to Medicaid, SNAP, etc. Post-secondary institutions cannot pick up the tab because they are also facing immense funding cuts from your Department.
 - a. If you dismantle the Department of Education and cut programs for first-generation postsecondary students, do you acknowledge that fewer first-generation students will have the opportunity to pursue higher education?
- 13. There is currently a backlog of nearly two million income driven repayment (IDR) applications, leaving borrowers struggling to access repayment options and at risk for default and wage garnishment.
 - a. What specific steps is the Department taking to resolve this backlog?
 - b. What would you say to my constituents who can't afford the standard payment, still have not had their IDR applications processed, and will face financial ruin if their wages are garnished?
- 14. There have been issues with borrowers who are making regular payments not seeing those payments reflected in their servicer records. These are folks who are relying on their loans being eliminated after a certain number of payments to their IDR plans.
 - a. How are you working to ensure the accuracy of payment counts on student loans?
 - b. How are you working to ensure that borrowers receive the relief they were promised?

Representative Lucy McBath (D-GA)

As you know, the Secretary of Education has direct authority over the cancellation of research contracts at the Department. On February 10th, the Institute for Education Sciences cancelled research contracts that directly impact students with disabilities including:

91990019C0078: This contract is to design and evaluate the effectiveness of transition supports for youth with disabilities served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This contract was also known as the Charting My Path For Future Success Program.

91990018C0046: This contract is for An Impact Evaluation of Training in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Reading in Early Elementary School (MTSS-R)

ED-IES-15-C-0046: Post High School Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities. This contract will collect administrative records and describe the secondary school, postsecondary education, and employment and earning outcomes of a sample of high school youth with disabilities.

Please provide the answers to the following questions **without** providing any personally identifiable information of the participants of these programs.

1. Why were these three contracts for disabled students identified by the Secretary for cancellation?
 - a. What is the specific reasoning given by the Department for the immediate cancellation of the three contracts identified above?
2. You stated in the hearing that “students with disabilities are not impacted.” Can you please explain how the cancellation of these three contracts will not or have not already negatively impacted students with disabilities?
3. Could you please provide any next steps that this Administration is taking to reinstate or rebid any of the projects listed above?

91990019C0078 – Charting My Path for Future Success

The Charting My Path for Student Success Program served over 1,600 high school juniors and seniors with IEPs across 62 high schools in 13 school districts and 11 states. This project began in 2019 and spent a significant portion of its \$45,450,138 dollar allocation to recruit Local Education Agencies (LEAs) as well as teachers, students and their families to participate in transition support services intended to improve post-high school outcomes for students with disabilities. These services included year-round tutoring, mentoring, and weekly 1 on 1 and small group sessions for students with IEP’s – running the full range of disabilities from physical, mental, and various levels of severity.

1. Can the Department please identify all 13 LEAs that were participating in this program at the time of cancellation?

2. How many students were being served by this program at the time of cancellation?
3. How much of the \$45,450,138 dollar allocation was already spent setting up and conducting this research/program¹?
 - a. Did the Department consider that cancelling this program after spending millions of taxpayer dollars would result in those dollars being spent with no usable outcome, research, or benefit to the participants?
4. Was there any warning given to the students and families participating in this program that immediate cancellation was being considered?
5. Was there any warning to the LEAs participating that immediate cancellation was being considered?
6. Has the Department done any outreach or offered any sort of support for the families that may need assistance in adjusting to unexpected immediate changes to their students' Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or their plans for the upcoming summer?
7. Were any educators participating in this program dismissed from their position, re-assigned to a different school, or subjected to a decrease in compensation due to the cancellation of this program? If so, please provide further details as to how many educators were impacted and whether they were dismissed, reassigned, or subjected to a decrease in compensation.

Additional Questions from Rep. McBath

1. Secretary McMahon, you have often talked about the importance of getting Americans into the workforce, a goal shared by this Committee.
 - a. Do you recognize the value of adult education in ensuring that every adult have access to a General Educational Development (GED) program or high school equivalency and the skills that will lift them out of poverty, off government assistance, and into family-sustaining jobs that support our economy?
 - i. How does the President's budget proposal aim to accomplish those goals when it proposes to eliminate funding for adult education?
 - b. If not through adult education, how does the Administration propose that adults without high school credentials and sufficient literacy skills acquire them?
 - i. What is the Administration's plan for upskilling the 130 million adults who have a literacy level of 6th grade or lower?
2. One of the proposed priorities for the Department of Education is literacy, where you state, "Federal education spending must now prioritize a vital and foundational goal: ensuring that every student in America becomes proficient in reading."² That goal must apply to both adult as well as traditional learners.

The President's Executive Order designating English as the Official Language states, "In welcoming new Americans, a policy of encouraging the learning and adoption of our

¹ <https://ies.ed.gov/use-work/evaluations/evaluation-transition-supports-youth-disabilities>

² <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/05/21/2025-09093/proposed-priorities-and-definitions-secretarys-supplemental-priorities-and-definitions-on>

national language will make the United States a shared home and empower new citizens to achieve the American dream.³”

What would the Department propose to support these individuals in learning English if adult education programs are no longer funded?

3. ED recently released estimated allocations for the Adult Education State Grants, but this year’s letter to State directors omitted the estimated allocations for the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) program, which have historically been included in these allocation letters and are required by law to be reserved under Section 243 of WIOA.

As you may know, this program provides integrated English literacy and civics education, in combination with integrated education and training activities, for English language learners to gain literacy and fluency in English. Again, this is in line with the goals of this Administration outlined in President Trump’s Executive Order designating English as the Official Language, which states, “Speaking English not only opens doors economically, but it helps newcomers engage in their communities, participate in national traditions, and give back to our society³.”

- a. As you know IELCE was funded for FY 2025 per the "FY2025 Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act". Does the Department plan on sending these funds to the states for Fiscal Year 2025, as required under 29 USC 3291(a)(2)?
- b. If ED does plan to fund this program, when will the Department release the funding allocations for IELCE, at the FY24 level, as per Congressional intent?

[NOTE on the cites listed: WIOA Sec. 211(a) RESERVATION OF FUNDS.—From the sum appropriated under section 206 [authorization of appropriations] for a fiscal year, the Secretary— (1) shall reserve 2 percent to carry out section 242, except that the amount so reserved shall not exceed \$15,000,000; and (2) shall reserve 12 percent of the amount that remains after reserving funds under paragraph (1) to carry out section 243.]

³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/designating-english-as-the-official-language-of-the-united-states/>