

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 19, 2025

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

Dear Secretary McMahon:

We write to raise serious objections and call for the immediate reinstatement of federal funding provided in the Department of Education’s (“Department”) appropriations laws intended to help strengthen our educator workforce in at least 34 states and improve teaching and learning for our nation’s students. Approximately two weeks ago, the Department announced that it terminated “over \$600 million in divisive teacher training grants” and created confusion for schools and institutions of higher education around our nation.¹²³ The amount of reported savings is misleading since many of the terminated grants had already been partially spent and were in active use. Further, it appears that terminated grantees received no information from Department staff in response to their requests for additional information, even for grants with obligated and spent funds.⁴ It is shocking to us that the Department would take such disruptive action to take away funding from schools as they work to implement their approved plans to improve outcomes for our nation’s students. Thankfully, a federal judge ordered the administration to temporarily restore these grants in eight states⁵ and just yesterday, another federal judge ordered the reinstatement of more than 100 of these grants,⁶ but every impacted grantee deserves immediate action.

U.S. students have not recovered from the devastating effects of the pandemic. National scores are below pre-pandemic levels in *all* tested grades and subjects, and gaps continue to grow between higher-performing and lower-performing students. A February 2025 analysis found that our students are approximately half a grade level behind pre-pandemic achievement in math and reading.⁷ With teachers and principals being the most important in-school factors to student

¹ <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-cuts-over-600-million-divisive-teacher-training-grants#:~:text=U.S.%20Department%20of%20Education%20Cuts%20Over%20%24600%20Million%20in%20Divisive%20Teacher%20Training%20Grants,-U.S.%20Department%20of&text=The%20U.S.%20Department%20of%20Education,education%20agencies%20on%20divisive%20ideologies>

² <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nc/charlotte/news/2025/02/27/u-s--department-of-education-cuts-funding-for-teacher-training-program->

³ <https://www.abc15.com/rebound/state-of-education/federal-government-cuts-grant-from-valley-school-districts-over-dei-policy>

⁴ <https://www.ednc.org/perspective-terminated-a-federally-funded-teacher-resident-program-for-high-needs-districts-comes-to-an-abrupt-end/>

⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-judge-orders-trump-administration-restore-teacher-preparation-grants-2025-03-11/>

⁶ <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/69700167/american-association-of-colleges-for-teacher-education-v-carter/>

⁷ <https://educationrecoverycorecard.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Pivoting-from-Pandemic-Recovery-to-Long-Term-Reform-A-District-Level-Analysis.pdf>

learning, these grant cancellations will hinder pandemic learning recovery and break President Trump’s promises of “great principals and great teachers.”⁸

The cancellation of these grants comes at a time when our country faces dire teacher shortages. A recent analysis of state-identified teacher shortages found that in recent school years, nationally, 1 in 8 of all teaching positions—or over 400,000 positions—are vacant or filled by a teacher who is not fully certified for their position.⁹ This school year, 49 states reported to the Department critical shortages in math, science, or special education teachers.¹⁰ In rural America, to attract and retain teachers in many places, including in states like Colorado,¹¹ Louisiana,¹² Missouri,¹³ and Texas,¹⁴ districts were forced to move to 4-day school weeks, despite the unknown impact on student achievement. Research shows that principals are the second most important in-school factor to student learning and also impact teacher retention. Yet, about one in ten principals leave the field every year.¹⁵

Congress created and funded the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP), Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED), and Teacher and School Leader (TSL) Incentive Fund programs in a bipartisan manner to ensure that all students have access to an effective educator workforce. The Department’s decision to terminate locally-driven grants previously awarded to schools, institutions of higher education, and other partners to address educator shortages and improve the quality of the teaching workforce will have long-term consequences on student outcomes. These terminations create confusion for dozens of local communities supported by now unavailable grant funds.¹⁶ Cutting off grant funds already adopted and in use in local budgets shows utter disregard to local officials who are now faced with a lengthy process for challenging the terminations and are required to adjust their adopted budgets and plans.¹⁷ These local communities may also face difficult decisions to curtail activities paid for by these terminated grant funds, such as recruiting teachers in rural communities, improving literacy, and mentoring early-career teachers to improve retention. Ultimately, the Department’s decision to terminate these grant funds simply passes necessary expenses onto local and state taxpayers, who may have to sustain costs previously supported by federal funds that have been taken away by the Trump administration.

We are deeply disappointed that despite claims of radical transparency from President Trump and other administration officials, the Department has not provided any transparency to Congress

⁸ https://mcpplatform.donaldjtrump.com/?_gl=1*1bcm45t*_gcl_au*ODAxMTI0OTQuMTc0MDc3MTk3Nw..&_ga=2.30316733.361047892.1740771977-50896088.1740771977

⁹ <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/state-teacher-shortages-vacancy-resource-tool-2024>

¹⁰ <https://tsa.ed.gov/#/home/>

¹¹ https://maps.keystone.org/the-sun/explore/4_day_week/index.html

¹² <https://kpel965.com/louisiana-schools-4-day-week-2024-2025-year/>

¹³ <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/districts-and-charters-attending-four-day-week-2010-11-2023-24>

¹⁴ <https://www.tcta.org/professional-resources/publications/the-classroom-teacher/winter-2022-23/more-texas-districts-shift-schedules-to-four-day-school-weeks>

¹⁵ https://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/press_releases/7_31_2023.asp#:~:text=Key%20Findings&text=Of%20all%20public%20school%20principals%20in%202020%2D21%20with%20more.45%2D54%20years%20of%20age

¹⁶ <https://www.wspa.com/news/top-stories/laurens-co-school-district-grant-terminated-over-dei-claims/>

¹⁷ <https://www.abc15.com/rebound/state-of-education/federal-government-cuts-grant-from-valley-school-districts-over-dei-policy>

or the public about its teacher training grant terminations. Instead, the President's disregard for the law and his desire to find savings to pay for his tax cuts for billionaires and large corporations seems to be driving these terminations. Given the need for actual transparency, stability, and productivity in government, as well as the bipartisan support these critical education training programs have received for many years, it is critical for the Department to provide accurate, timely responses on its use of taxpayer resources provided by the laws passed by Congress. We request you provide written answers to the following questions as soon as possible but not later than March 26, 2025:

1. Please describe the policy and procedure established for the review of grants terminated on or after January 20, 2025.
 - a. Are they the same as any grant terminations prior to this date? If not, how and why were they different, including in the use of any program or technology not previously employed?
 - b. Please identify the offices and titles of staff involved in the review.
 - c. How many employees involved in the review were onboarded at the Department on or after January 20, 2025? Please describe each of such employee's role in the review.
 - d. Please provide the total costs, including all personnel and non-personnel costs, of the review.
 - e. Please identify any other program currently undergoing or planned for the same or similar review and the associated timeline for each such review.
 - f. Please specifically identify each program undergoing a different review and explain each difference and the reason for each such difference for such program.
2. Please explain the policy and procedure for offering grantees the opportunity to clarify, explain or modify any element of their approved application prior to termination to avoid the disruption to grant activities that the Department's termination has caused. Please explain why an opportunity was not offered in each case of it not being offered.
3. Please explain the policy and procedure for offering grantees the opportunity to appeal their grant termination. When will appeals be reviewed, and when will grantees receive a decision on their appeal?
4. For each program that includes a terminated grant, please provide the following about all such terminated grants:
 - a. The total number of grants terminated by fiscal year of initial funding,
 - b. The total amount of funding expected under the approved budgets of terminated grants on official documentation as of January 1, 2025 for each fiscal year,
 - c. The total amount of funding outlaid as of the date of response to this letter for each fiscal year, and
 - d. The total amount of funding deobligated by fiscal year as of the date of termination.

5. For each program that includes a terminated grant, please provide the following about all such terminated grants:
 - a. The total number of educators expected to participate in professional development activities,
 - b. The total number of new educators expected to be prepared,
 - c. The expected number of years of service that were expected from participants under each grant,
 - d. The number of years of service that had already been completed,
 - e. The total number of schools expected to benefit from any grant activities, and
 - f. The total number of states in which any grant activities were expected to take place.

6. For each program that includes a terminated grant, please provide the following:
 - a. The name of each recipient of a grant not terminated by program and fiscal year of initial funding,
 - b. An assurance that each non-terminated grant was subject to the same policy and procedure described in response to the first question, and as applicable, the reason for not doing so, and
 - c. Please provide the most recent annual performance report submitted by each non-terminated grantee prior to January 1, 2025.

7. For each terminated grant, please provide the most recent annual performance report submitted by such grantee prior to January 1, 2025, if applicable.

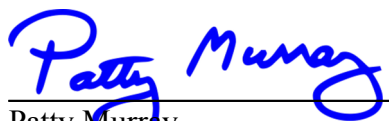
8. For each terminated grant, please provide the following:
 - a. The Department's definition of divisive ideology,
 - b. The Department's definition of inappropriate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and
 - c. The specific evidence demonstrating how the grantee's approved grant activities are inconsistent with such definitions of divisive ideology and DEI.

9. Please explain how and when you will comply with the temporary restraining orders issued by federal judges on March 10, 2025 and March 17, 2025.

10. Please provide a detailed plan on how the Department will prioritize training and preparing educators for the classroom.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to your prompt response.

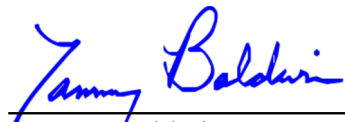
Sincerely,



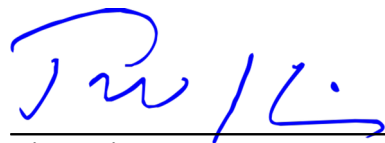
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



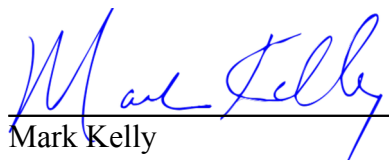
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Ruben Gallego
United States Senator



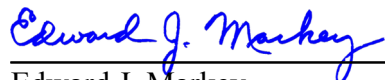
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



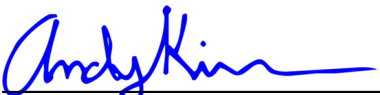
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Andy Kim
United States Senator