March 26, 2026

Dear Members of Congress,

We, the undersigned 56 organizations, write for two reasons. The first is to thank you and your colleagues for preserving FY 2026 funding for most Department of Education programs, including vital programs supporting family and community engagement in our nation's schools.

Second, we write to encourage stronger oversight of these valuable dollars and programs given ongoing actions by this Administration. In the budgeting process, Congress showed that the Department of Education plays a vital role in supporting the education of our nation's children. Appropriations decisions signal a deeply held respect for the expertise present in the Department and the value present in having clear, timely, and efficient administration. However, this Administration threatens these programs by continuing to move functions outside the Department of Education, withholding funding, and prematurely discontinuing multi-year grants. These activities represent attempts to practically dismantle and destabilize the Department and its programs despite congressional intent.

We ask that Congress increase its oversight and monitoring of the Department of Education and the programs it is supposed to administer. We ask that Congress:

1) clearly and decisively stop the use of interagency agreements (IAAs) as a way to move entire programs and core functions out of the Department, and

2) investigate ways grant withholdings and discontinuations have been used by this Administration to disrupt congressionally-authorized programs.

We are especially concerned about these issues as they impact family, school, and community engagement. Family and community engagement in education is nonpartisan. It is built upon shared trust among educators, families, schools, and other community institutions. When done well, it amplifies all work within a school and leads to improvements in student achievement, teacher satisfaction, and chronic absenteeism, just to name a few. However, engagement takes time and stability to build trusting relationships that support student learning and school improvement. The actions of this Administration severely challenge family engagement programming across the nation.

1) Stop the Use of Interagency Agreements (IAAs)

The Administration has been open about its intent to shutter the Department of Education. However, rather than follow the required legislative process to do so, it is instead attempting to hollow out the Department and shift critical functions elsewhere. This represents a de facto attempt to close the Department of Education and supersede congressional authority.

Congress has already made its stance clear through the appropriations process. Congress said in its Joint Explanatory Statement connected to the recently passed FY 2026 Labor-H appropriations package that "no authorities exist for the Department of Education to transfer its fundamental responsibilities under numerous authorizing and appropriations laws."[1] Moreover, Congress indicated its concern because other agencies "do not have experience, expertise, or capacity to carry out these programs and activities and lack developed relationships and

[1] Joint Explanatory Statement, p. 83.

communications with relevant stakeholders, including States."[2] Finally, Congress identified the real inevitabilities of these IAAs, noting that "fragmenting responsibilities for education programs across multiple agencies will create inefficiencies, result in additional costs to the American taxpayer, and cause delays and administrative challenges in Federal funding reaching States, school districts, and schools."[3] Congress also stated that they were, "concerned this will weaken Federal support to protect the rights of students, children, youth, and families under Federal education laws."[4]

We agree with Congress's assessment of the IAAs. Educational programs should be administered holistically by an agency with programmatic expertise, capacity to support the field, and with consistent and transparent funding processes to avoid confusion and undue delays. Grantees and other stakeholders need clear guidance about what is happening to these programs.

However, following its receipt of Congress's concerns, the Administration promptly ignored them and has already announced new IAAs, including the movement of key family engagement programs into the Department of Health and Human Services. Operationally, creating more administrative separation between family engagement and other education programs by splitting them into different agencies will hinder initiatives that seek to integrate families throughout the education process. Continuing with IAAs also shows that this Administration intends to continue dismantling the Department.

We also applaud Congress for recognizing the need for oversight in its Joint Explanatory Statement. The biweekly briefings Congress called for may be the way for Congress to better monitor IAAs. That said, it is unclear whether plans exist for these briefings, their format, or to what degree they will be avenues for accountability. We remain concerned that briefings will not stop attempts to circumvent Congress, particularly if oversight occurs only after-the-fact.

We therefore ask that Congress restore all programs to the Department of Education that have been moved via IAAs and issue clear directives to stop the Administration from gutting the Department through its use of IAAs in the future. We also ask Congress to increase its monitoring and oversight any time the Administration attempts to alter programs through IAAs.

2) Prevent Disruptions to Congressionally-Authorized Programs

In addition, this Administration has shown that it does not consistently adhere to funding agreements. Last July, the Administration withheld $6 billion in grants, including $1.3 billion in afterschool funding. These dollars are absolutely critical for programming that, among other things, engages families and communities to support student learning. Although the funds were ultimately released, largely thanks to key legislators speaking up to protect these programs, the chaos surrounding the Administration's decisions sent shockwaves through the system. We are concerned that these and any other vital programs will again face needless chaos, and that the damage done will not be easily corrected.

Later in the year, the Administration unilaterally cancelled five Statewide Family Engagement Center grants and 19 Full-Service Community Schools grants, citing dubious rationales for

[2] Joint Explanatory Statement, p. 84.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

doing so. While some grantees have chosen to challenge these decisions in court, many do not have the capacity to pursue lawsuits that shift resources from their programmatic missions.

Multi-year federal funding commitments are essential to the sustained effectiveness of family engagement programs. However, the Administration has shown it will not hesitate to destabilize programs by undoing previous funding promises. Although less direct than the use of IAAs, withholdings and discontinuations similarly harm education programs in ways that circumvent congressional intent and these actions are not unique to family, school, and community engagement. Without congressional oversight, the Administration has signaled it will likely continue disrupting educational programming.

We ask that Congress investigate the many past grant withholdings and discontinuations, including those in family engagement programming, and do more to protect funding commitments from unilateral Administrative actions in the future.

For any questions, please contact Vito J. Borrello, Executive Director of the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (borrellov@nafsce.org).

Sincerely,

National Organizations (26)

Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools
BloomED Group
Book Harvest
CommunityShare
Council of Administrators of Special Education
EDGE Partners
EdTrust
Education Law Center
EnvisionEdPlus
Exceptional Lives
Family Engagement Lab
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Mocha Moms, Inc.
National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE)
National Association of African American Parents and Youth - NAAAPY
National Association of Educational Translators and Interpreters of Spoken Languages (NAETISL)
National Center for Families Learning
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Parent Leadership Institute
Parent Teacher Home Visits
Parents for Public Schools, Inc.
Partnership for the Future of Learning
Patricia Weinzapfel Communications and Consulting
Project Appleseed
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Simplify Language

Regional, State, and Local Organizations (30)

Superior Unified School District (AZ)
Head Start WEST (CA)
Mt. Shasta Union School District (CA)
South Fork Union Elementary School District (CA)
The Loken Foundation (CA)
Veritas Educational LLC (CA)
COFI / POWER-PAC IL (IL)
Illinois Head Start Association (IL)
Lake Station Community Schools (IN)
Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence (KY)
Washington County Schools (KY)
In Reach, Inc. (MD)
Parents for Healthy Homes (MI)
Pine River Area Schools (MI)
Dixon School District 9 (MT)
Clifton PRAISE (NJ)
Paterson Education Foundation, Inc (NJ)
Mountain Mahogany Community School (NM)
Education Impact Foundation, Inc. (NY)
INCLUDEnyc (NY)
Liberty Local Schools (OH)
Richard Allen Preparatory (OH)
Millington Municipal Schools (TN)
Jim Hogg County ISD (TX)
McDade ISD (TX)
Students Engaged in Advancing Texas (SEAT) (TX)
Bright home daycare (VA)
Washington Parent Ambassadors (WA)
Fremont County School District #21 (WY)
UPLIFT, serving as Wyoming Family Voices and Wyoming Federation of Families (WY)