

Protecting Family and Community Engagement in the FY26 Federal Budget

The National Alliance for Family Engagement is a coalition convened by the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement that advances collective communications and policy to support the conditions that foster equitable partnerships between families, schools and communities and to reduce the barriers to those partnerships so that everyone has an opportunity to participate.

In a joint letter dated September 2nd, 2025, 208 organizations urged members of Congress to **prioritize family and community engagement in education by maintaining funding for those programs and reaffirming the shared commitment to the children, families, and communities they represent by passing the Senate Appropriation Committee's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (Labor-H) bill (S.2587)**. See full letter at: <https://nafsce.org/page/2LettertoCongress>

Why Family and Community Engagement?

Family, school, and community engagement is a mutual partnership that builds connections among the adults that encircle children to build an environment that supports learning, healthy development, and long-term success. Federal investments that support family and community engagement:

- Put understandable information about student progress in the hands of parents and caregivers, help families choose services that best meet their students' needs, and help them understand how they can support learning at home.
- Help families understand how to partner with schools and navigate community resources.
- Provide students and families with enrichment opportunities before kids start formal schooling and when kids are out of school.
- Help families access health, mental health, housing, food, and other resources that kids and families may need.

Decades of research show that meaningful family engagement directly benefits student learning, motivation, and achievement across all grade levels and these benefits are seen across all socioeconomic and racial backgrounds. When families are involved in their child's education studies have found that:

- Students show higher academic performance, greater motivation, and improved school engagement.¹
- Students' language comprehension, reading achievement, and expressive language improves.²
- More students reach or exceed math proficiency on standardized tests.³
- Homework completion increases by 40% and class participation improves by 15%.⁴

The Bottom Line

We urge all Congresspersons to support the Senate Committee on Appropriation's FY26 Labor-H bill (S.2587) because it maintains most existing family engagement investments.

Family engagement is not optional, it's essential. Strong, sustained partnerships between families and schools are key to academic success and student well-being. Our country must continue to invest in what works for our families and students.

1 Clark, S. (2007). Why it is important to involve parents in their children's literacy development. National Literacy Trust. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED496346.pdf>

2 Ibid.

3 Sheldon, S.B., & Epstein, J. (2005). Involvement counts: Family and community partnerships and mathematics achievement. The Journal of Educational Research, 98(4), 196-207. <https://doi.org/10.3200/JOER.98.4.196-207>

4 Kraft, M. A., & Dougherty, S. M. (2013). The effect of teacher-family communication on student engagement: Evidence from a randomized field experiment. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 6(3), 199-222. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2012.743636>

A Glance at the Impact

- 1. Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFEC):** In SFECs first five years (2019-2023), they 1) provided training to 526,857 parents so they could better understand school performance report cards, 2) provided 7,516 high-impact services that trained parents to effectively engage in activities improving student achievement, 3) and provided 5,591 high-impact services that built capacity for family and community engagement among local and state education agencies.⁵
- 2. IDEA Parent Training and Information Centers:** Provided 2,106,570 services to parents and professionals in Fiscal Year 2022, with 90% of parents reporting enhanced capacity to work with schools and service providers and 95% reporting enhanced knowledge of IDEA rights and responsibilities to support the needs of their children with disabilities.⁶
- 3. 21st Century Community Learning Centers:** Provided services to 1,382,476 students, 353,311 family members, and 178,306 staff across 10,479 centers. Research found that participation in 21st CCLC programs led to increased engagement in learning for 7 in 10 students, as well as improved attendance, grades and state assessment performance.⁷
- 4. Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS):** There are 91 current grantees across 39 states receiving FSCS grants, enabling the redesign of thousands of schools. Research on FSCS has demonstrated improved student attendance and engagement, higher academic achievement, stronger family and community partnerships, and a return on investment of \$15 for every \$1 spent on community schools.⁸

⁵ U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). Innovation and Improvement Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request. <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/overview/budget/budget24/justifications/f-i.pdf>;

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). Innovation and Improvement Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request. <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/overview/budget/budget25/justifications/g-ii.pdf>.

⁶ U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *Special Education Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request*. <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/overview/budget/budget24/justifications/i-special.pdf>.

⁷ Afterschool Alliance. (2024, May). 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Accelerating Learning. Supporting Families. Earning Results. <https://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/21stCCLC-Overview-2024.pdf>.

⁸ Institute for Educational Leadership & Coalition for Community Schools. (June, 2025). *The Power of Community Schools*. <https://www.communityschools.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/06/CS-Advocacy-Brief-FY25-.pdf>

FY 2026 Funding Recommendations that Protect and Support Family Engagement

Support the Senate Committee's FY 2026 Labor-H Bill by maintaining specified funding streams for essential family engagement programs and restoring programs eliminated or receiving cuts by the House.

Essential Family Engagement Programs to Promote and Protect in the Final Labor-H Bill (Figures in thousands of dollars)	FY2024 Final	House Approp. FY2026	Senate Approp. FY2026
Statewide Family Engagement Centers (ESEA IV-E)	20,000	0	20,000
Parent Information Centers (IDEA sections 671-673)	33,152	33,152	33,152
21st Century Community Learning Centers (ESEA IV-B)	1,329,673	1,330,000	1,329,673
Full-Service Community Schools (ESEA IV-F-2, section 4625)	150,000	0	135,000
Education For Homeless Children And Youths (MVHAA Title VII-B)	129,000	129,000	129,000
English Language Acquisition (ESEA III-A)	890,000	0	890,000
Migrant Education (ESEA I-C)	375,626	0	375,626
State Personnel Development (IDEA Part D, subpart 1)	38,630	38,630	38,630
Preschool Grants (IDEA B-619)	420,000	420,000	420,000
Promise Neighborhoods (ESEA IV-F-2, section 4624)	91,000	0	91,000
Ready to Learn Programming (ESEA IV-F-4, section 4643)	31,000	0	28,500

To learn more about these programs, the National Alliance for Family Engagement, and its convener the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement visit <https://nafsce.org/page/2LettertoCongress>

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