

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 11, 2026

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

Dear Secretary McMahon:

We write to express our strong opposition to the Department of Education’s (“the Department”) recent action on December 12th, 2025, to discontinue \$168 million in Full-Service Community Schools grants serving students across 12 states. Pulling expected federal grant funds from public schools in the middle of the school year, built around community partnerships and parent engagement, is just plain wrong. Congress authorized and appropriated funds specifically for the Full-Service Community Schools program because research shows community schools improve student academic achievement, reduce chronic absenteeism, and support student wellbeing.¹ We demand that the Department fully reinstate all Full-Service Community Schools grants that were abruptly discontinued.

The Full-Service Community School grant program supports school districts and public schools in their mission to meet students’ needs so they can succeed academically and in life, focusing on the school as a community center that can connect families to food, housing assistance, medical care, and other services. Community leadership and school coordinators partner to co-locate services and provide cost-effective resources that are deemed necessary by the families they serve—a community-based approach that has been successful in both rural and urban areas. Multiple studies show that community schools lead to more positive academic outcomes for students and more successful schools. Discontinuing these grants puts students’ progress in jeopardy.²

On December 12th, 2025, the Department abruptly discontinued \$168 million in grants to community schools just two weeks before their next round of funding was set to arrive. Across the country, nineteen grant recipients received letters alerting them that, effective immediately, their projects would no longer receive future federal funding under their approved grant awards, including in many rural communities. Your decision is forcing schools and community partners to eliminate vital services for students and families in the middle of the academic year, with no transition period or alternative support.

Full-Service Community Schools grants are generally authorized for five years, providing schools and partners with the stability to plan for the reliable delivery of services. The grants that were abruptly cancelled had either two or three years remaining in their approved five-year projects. This unnecessary termination of education funding is alarming families, disrupting

¹ <https://www.attendanceworks.org/take-action/educators/community-schools/>

² <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/community-schools-outcomes-factsheet>

carefully-planned programs that support children, and jeopardizing services for thousands of students in underserved communities. Schools that built partnerships with community organizations, hired staff, and made multi-year commitments to families now face breaking those promises through no fault of their own.

The Department claims that affected grantees violate civil rights law or conflict with the administration's policy priorities, but this rationale lacks any specificity. Grant recipients received letters providing few details, and just one week or less to appeal. These discontinuations directly contradict bipartisan congressional intent for this program. In 2023, Congress increased annual funding for the Full-Service Community Schools program from \$25 million to \$150 million, which was maintained in fiscal year 2024 and 2025 appropriations laws, reflecting bipartisan recognition that schools serving high-poverty communities require comprehensive support.³ All federal grants must abide by applicable requirements, but the Department has failed to produce legitimate reasons, including any grantee performance-related information, to discontinue multi-year grants that Congress authorized and appropriated, that grantees are implementing successfully, and that provide essential services to our underserved students.

We demand that you reinstate all community school grants that have been abruptly discontinued and respectfully suggest that the Department refocus its efforts to support community schools in their efforts to meet the needs of and improve education outcomes for all students.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Health, Education, Labor,
and Pensions



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Andy Kim
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Ben Ray Luján

Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

³ <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/federal-funding-community-schools-hits-historic-levels>