

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 16, 2025

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20002

The Honorable Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

RE: Immediately Release Critical Local Education Funds to Allow Hillsborough County Public Schools to Support Students and Families

Dear Secretary McMahon and Director Vought:

I urge you to immediately release the over \$6 billion in funding for local school districts around the country, including an estimated \$398 million for the State of Florida, which represents 15% of the State's federal K-12 budget. Freezing these funds without warning and with no indication of timing for their release has caused great uncertainty, as local school districts are currently finalizing their budgets for the 2025-2026 academic year.

The critical funding streams that are being withheld were approved by a bipartisan Congress to aid schools in training teachers, providing a well-rounded education, and supporting safe and healthy school and after-school initiatives. The freeze is also affecting adult education initiatives that help prepare adult learners for success in the workplace, enhancing their skills and allowing them to successfully fill jobs in the Tampa Bay area.

The Hillsborough County Public School (HCPS) district is the seventh largest local education agency in the nation, serving over 213,000 of our young neighbors and their families. The funding freeze has a potential impact of \$24.2 million on the district. I have heard directly from local school board members and the district about some of the benefits of this funding:

- **\$8.3 million in Title II, Part A Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants** funding is used to increase the quality and effectiveness of teachers and principals. HCPS uses these funds to support 27 mentors who assist first-year teachers in the classroom to quickly enhance their teaching skills and effectiveness; train new and returning teachers on literacy, math, science, social studies, STEM, music, art and physical education; and help teachers earn certifications like Reading, Gifted, and English for Speakers of Other Languages.

- **\$7.2 million in Title IV, Part A Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants** funding is used to enhance student access to a well-rounded education, safe and healthy schools, and technology integration. HCPS uses these funds for an Early Childhood Literacy Mobile Classroom for young K-2 students; 18 teachers focused on improving student performance and graduation rates; district attendance coordinators to ensure student attendance; 45 campus safety monitors at local middle and high schools; and an anti-bullying program that benefits 24,000 students in grades 3 and 4.
- **\$3.3 million in Title III, Part A English Language Acquisition Grants** funding is used to support English language learners to become proficient in a diverse and growing State. HCPS uses these funds to serve 26,617 English Language Learners of all ages who represent 203 different native languages across the district. Any delay in funding will reduce the district's ability to support language acquisition and integration, assess performance, and ensure academic success.
- **\$1.9 million in Title I, Part C Migrant Education Grants** funding is used to ensure that all migrant students achieve high standards and graduate with a high school diploma or equivalency that prepares them for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment. HCPS serves 1,659 K-12 students across the district, 202 out-of-school youth, and 261 young children aged 3-5 who receive home-based tutoring. Without these funds, HCPS would not be able to provide school enrollment, tutoring and graduation preparation; provide service referrals to community organizations to help families find medical services, nutrition assistance, etc.; and offer one-on-one navigation assistance to help families unfamiliar with the United States education system.

Outside of these important K-12 initiatives, HCPS is also impacted by a freeze on **\$3.36 million in Adult Education Basic Grants to States** funding, which supports adult education and literacy programs to allow adult learners to succeed in the workforce. HCPS uses these funds to support adult students over the age of 16 with high school completion, benchmark testing, workforce skills training, credit recovery, and more. It allows these students to enhance the knowledge and skills they need in subjects like reading, writing, digital learning and math to allow them to fill needed workforce positions in Hillsborough County.

This troubling delay of funding is unnecessarily disrupting budgeting and planning for the fast-approaching 2025-2026 academic school year, jeopardizing education initiatives for students and families and resulting in program cancellations. Therefore, I ask you to please respond to the following questions by July 23, 2025:

1. When will the Administration release the funding directed for state and local education agencies by Congress for use in the 2025-2026 academic year?
2. What outreach and communication has the Administration done to support state and local education agencies in this period of uncertainty?

I urge you to end the pause and immediately release these funds that are critical to our students, families, schools and the local economy in the Tampa Bay area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy Castor". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Kathy Castor
MEMBER OF CONGRESS