

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 22, 2026

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary
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 Education Department's proposed changes to the TRIO program in this year's TRIO Talent Search and Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) grant applications. The changes outlined in these applications represent a significant departure from TRIO's long-standing mission of college access and success, and they would have serious consequences for students across the country. We urge the Department to immediately withdraw the current applications and issue new guidance that reaffirms and protects this mission.

As currently written, the applications would make major structural changes that could eliminate up to two-thirds of existing programs, reduce future grant awards, and ultimately limit students' access to higher education support services nationwide. Even more troubling is the broader shift these changes signal: moving TRIO away from its core purpose of helping low-income and first-generation students access and complete college, and toward becoming an employment focused training pipeline.

When Congress created TRIO in the Higher Education Amendments of 1968, its goal was not to make another workforce development program. While workforce development is an important priority, there are already other established federal programs that focus on job training and placement. For nearly 60 years, TRIO has filled a critical and distinct role by opening the doors to higher education for underserved students and giving them the resources they need to complete their education.

Today, TRIO Talent Search serves around 300,000 middle and high school students each year through academic advising, career and financial counseling, and encouragement to graduate high school and pursue postsecondary education. If the changes proposed in this year's application were implemented, up to two-thirds of existing Talent Search programs could be cancelled, and the remaining awards would face 16% budget cuts. In Oregon alone, over 6,000 6th through 12th grade students could lose access to college readiness services, including in rural areas where TRIO is often the only resource available. For the programs that do survive, the proposed cuts would drop per pupil spending from \$580 to \$500. At a time when higher education costs are skyrocketing, housing is unaffordable, and wages are not keeping pace, our young people need more support, not less. Cutting funding for TRIO programs is entirely the wrong approach.

The impacts on EOC programs are equally alarming. EOC plays a vital role for adult learners who want to begin or return to postsecondary education, offering academic counseling, career workshops, college application assistance, and financial aid guidance. The proposed program

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changes would slash the number of EOC awards nationally from 160 to 55 and significantly reduce award amounts, forcing the remaining 55 programs to cut services. The application also favors a small number of state entities while providing no assurance that existing high-performing programs will be renewed. This not only impacts existing EOC programs but also discourages new applicants from proposing additional programs that could reach more adult learners. In Oregon, where there is currently only one EOC program in the state, this means the majority of adults who could benefit from EOC will be unable to access these critical services.

TRIO works. It is a strong federal investment in the 817,000 students who rely on its services. Talent Search participants are 22 percent more likely to enroll in college than their peers, and 73 percent of eligible EOC participants apply to college. These are the results of a program fulfilling its mission. We urge you not to undo this progress by pulling the rug out from under existing TRIO programs. The Department of Education must rescind the 2026 Talent Search and EOC applications and remove the unsupported changes that would cut funding and disadvantage smaller programs. We also urge you to extend current Talent Search and EOC grants to ensure there is no lapse in services before new guidance is issued.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to your prompt action to protect the future of these vital programs and the students they serve.

Sincerely,



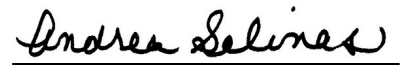
Janelle S. Bynum
Member of Congress



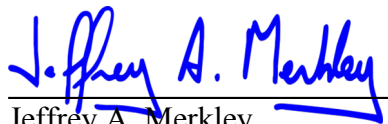
Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



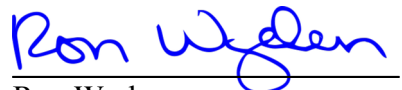
Maxine Dexter
Member of Congress



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Val Hoyle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "V".

Val Hoyle
Member of Congress