

Cosponsor the Bipartisan Reaching English Learners Act

Sponsored by Representatives Langevin, Hurd, and Espaillat

Led by Senator Cortez Masto in the Senate

Supported by the Joint National Committee for Languages, TESOL International Association, UnidosUS, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents, Association of Language Companies, American Federation of Teachers

Dear Colleague:

Approximately 5 million students, or **10 percent of all public-school students, are English learners (ELs)** whose native language is one other than English. These students, most of whom are U.S. citizens, speak a wide variety of languages, including Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic, and their population is growing rapidly.

The Department of Education reports that **32 states have a shortage of teachers for ELs**. This is reflected in a disheartening academic achievement gap: on the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress, 70 percent of eighth grade ELs scored “below basic” on reading proficiency, compared to 20 percent of non-ELs, while 69 percent of ELs scored “below basic” in math proficiency, compared to 24 percent of non-ELs. Moreover, the National Center for Education Statistics reports that 65 percent of EL students graduate high school in four years, compared to the national four-year graduation rate of 83 percent.

The *Reaching English Learners Act* would address this education crisis by funding collegiate and masters-level teacher preparation programs for future EL teachers. To apply for a grant, institutions of higher education would be required to partner with high-need local educational agencies to develop teaching programs that provide EL teacher candidates with skills related to:

- Helping ELs in early childhood education and elementary and secondary school programs achieve at high academic levels and attain English proficiency;
- Recognizing and addressing the social and emotional needs of ELs;
- Appropriately identifying and instructing ELs with disabilities; and
- Promoting parental, family, and community engagement in EL educational programs.

The bill would require teaching programs to offer high-quality clinical learning opportunities and provide the necessary coursework for teacher candidates to qualify for EL teaching certifications. Grant preference would be given to programs that recruit and enroll former ELs and students from other underrepresented groups.

For more information or to cosponsor the *Reaching English Learners Act*, please contact Kerry McKittrick at 202-225-2735 or kerry.mckittrick@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

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Member of Congress

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