

Monday, March 24, 2025

Dear Partner in Education,

I am writing to provide you with an update on President Trump's executive order to dismantle the United States Department of Education (USDE) entitled, "Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities."

While we know that it will take an act of Congress to disband the Department, the executive order directs U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon "to the maximum extent appropriate and permitted by law, take all necessary steps to facilitate the closure of the Department of Education and return authority over education to the States and local communities while ensuring the effective and uninterrupted delivery of services, programs, and benefits on which Americans rely."

Next week, I will be traveling to Washington D.C., where Secretary McMahon has confirmed a meeting with me and several of my fellow state Secretaries of Education. I intend to openly share the concerns I have heard expressed by Pennsylvania's school administrators, librarians, and others, and ensure she hears some of the realized and potential impacts on Pennsylvanians if the proposed plan is enacted, including:

- Canceled or delayed repayments of funding used for implementing structured literacy plans, tutoring and after-school programs, reducing class sizes, and augmenting instructional supports;
- Uncertainty regarding the future of ESSA and IDEA funds which are used to ensure all students receive access to a free and appropriate public education, especially our most vulnerable students;
- Delayed responses to Civil Rights inquiries, including those for our most vulnerable students;
- Barriers to accessing postsecondary education, due to limited financial aid assistance and military ASVAB testing; and
- Loss of technical assistance from USDE staff and the 14 Regional Comprehensive Centers that develop critical resources and guidance documents to benefit all Pennsylvania schools.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the proposed elimination of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) under another recent [executive order](#) entitled, "Continuing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy." IMLS is the only federal agency dedicated to funding library services, and Pennsylvania libraries rely heavily on services funded by the agency, including the [SPARK Library](#) consortium, [PA Forward](#) and [POWER Library](#). While the full extent of changes remains uncertain, the agency's proposed elimination raises concerns about disruptions to these services.

As Governor Josh Shapiro said last week, "The President indicated that they're not going to pull back any dollars to our Commonwealth. If they do, I'll be prepared to take action, just as I was a month ago when they froze over \$2 billion worth of money that

was scheduled to come to the Commonwealth to help plug wells and stop people from literally falling into abandoned mines. We sued, we engaged, we won, and we got our money back. So if anybody tries to take anything from Pennsylvania, particularly our students, they'll have to go through me." It is paramount that we ensure students and families – particularly those who are most vulnerable, including students with disabilities and those from low-income families – have access to a free and fair education system.

As I gain more clarity on the executive order and its impacts from my meeting with Secretary McMahon and our federal education partners, I will stay in close communication with you. In the meantime, I encourage you to work closely with your professional education associations to inform them about how these federal actions would impact your school communities.

Thank you for all that you do on behalf of Pennsylvania's schools, libraries, learners, and communities.

Carrie Rowe, Ed.D. | Acting Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Education