

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 10, 2025

The Honorable Linda E. McMahon
U.S. Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave SW
Washington, DC 20202

The Honorable Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th St NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Secretary McMahon and Director Vought:

We write to urge you to immediately release TRIO grant awards for the following programs: Upward Bound, Veterans Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Educational Opportunity Centers. All of the TRIO programs support postsecondary access, retention, and completion for low-income, first-generation students from all backgrounds. TRIO programs are located on campuses across our country, in every state, and in rural, suburban, and urban communities. The individualized counselling, advising, and other supportive services that TRIO programs provide to students in both high school and college are critical to the success of low-income, first-generation higher education students. These programs help approximately 870,000 students prepare for, enter, and graduate from college each year. Congress annually appropriates funding for TRIO on a bipartisan basis, and the FY25 Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025, which President Trump signed into law, appropriated \$1.191 billion for TRIO programs.

The data proves that TRIO works. Since its inception in 1964, TRIO has produced over 6 million college graduates. This, in turn, leads to higher rates of college enrollment, completion, employment, and compensation for TRIO graduates, a boon to local economies as program participants are transformed into taxpayers who help their communities thrive. Students in Upward Bound, for example, are more than twice as likely to earn a bachelor's degree by age 24 than other students from some of the United States' poorest households.¹ Similarly, Veterans Upward Bound participants are 42% more likely than their peers to earn a bachelor's degree within six years.² In addition, data from 2022 indicates that 67.5% of Talent Search participants enrolled in a postsecondary education program immediately after high school graduation, and that 73% of eligible participants in the Educational Opportunity Centers applied for college admission.³ We must do what we can to support our low-income, first-generation, veteran, and disabled students, which means supporting federal TRIO programs and the students who benefit from them.

¹ https://coenet.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/TRIO_Fast-Facts-Research-Brief_v6.pdf.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

Yet on August 26, instead of sending TRIO Programs their Grant Award Notifications (GANs), Upward Bound, Veterans Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Educational Opportunity Center programs received a letter indicating that “September start dates will have their current budget period end dates extended through September 30, 2025.” The letter further explained: “This will allow your project to remain open and continue operations with available program funds through this date while the Department of Education finalizes the issuance of this year’s NCC awards.”

A “No Cost Extension” is not helpful to programs that start their funding year on September 1 because many programs do not have funding to do their work during the month of September. These TRIO Programs were previously advised by the Department to “spend down” their money by August 31, which is the end of their funding year. In addition, because of the grant cancellations in other programs, many institutions will not provide other funding to their TRIO programs in the absence of those award notices for 2025-2026 out of fear that their TRIO programs will ultimately see their federal grants cancelled.

We are concerned that TRIO programs nationwide will experience an unnecessary, increased burden and that students’ futures will be less successful if they do not receive their appropriated funds immediately. The delayed delivery of notifications for the June 1 Upward Bound, for example, has already increased strain on program administrators and, more importantly, students. By delaying notification of these grant awards and funding amounts, programs have already been forced to make difficult decisions, including laying off staff or scaling back services. This has a direct impact on the timeliness and quality of TRIO services, and it will result in many students losing access to the help they need to succeed.

We are deeply concerned that a further delay in award notifications will result in irreversible damage to our students, families, and communities, as many rely on the vital programs and services provided by TRIO programs. Therefore, we respectfully urge you to send all TRIO grant award notifications immediately.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510



Tina Smith
United States Senator



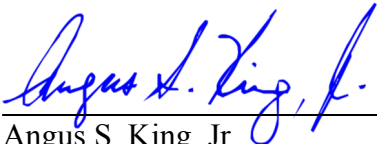
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Ruben Gallego
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



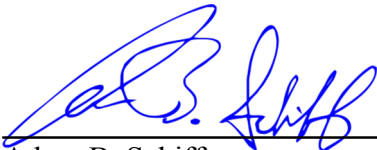
Jacky Rosen
U.S. Senator



Lisa Blunt Rochester
United States Senator



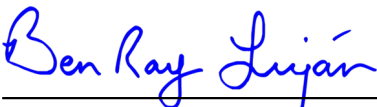
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



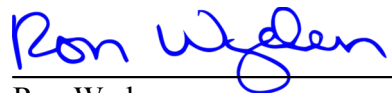
Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



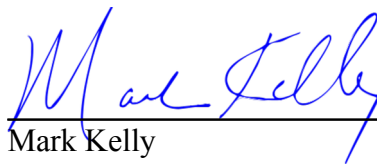
Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



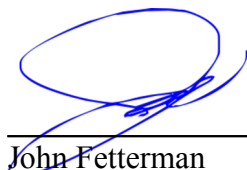
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



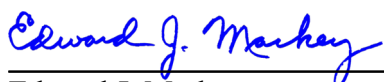
Mark Kelly
United States Senator



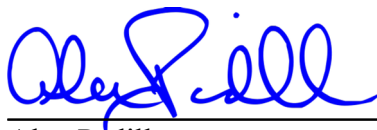
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Personnel



John Fetterman
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



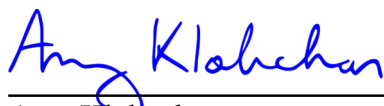
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



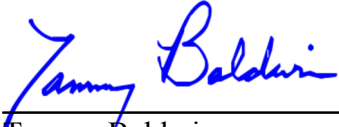
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

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Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



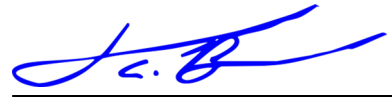
Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



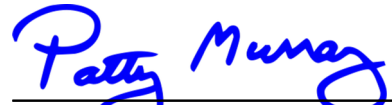
Andy Kim
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator