

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 15, 2026

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary McMahon:

As members of the New Hampshire Congressional delegation and as strong supporters of TRIO, we write with serious concern over the Trump Administration's actions to weaken and divert the focus of the Federal TRIO programs away from college preparation, access, and success. We urge you to reverse course and revise the March 2026 grant competition parameters for the TRIO Talent Search¹ (TS) program and the Educational Opportunity Center (EOC)² program to ensure better alignment with Congressional intent. The Department of Education also must ensure there is no lapse in TS and EOC services by issuing a one-year extension to the currently funded programs.

Congress established TRIO in the 1960s³ with the intent of helping students from disadvantaged backgrounds complete high school, access postsecondary education, and graduate from college. TRIO invests in the potential that all students have to succeed in college and helps students and their families realize that potential by breaking down barriers to access and support. TRIO programs provide academic exploration and guidance, which help students pursue a range of postsecondary fields of study. Congress went on to create the McNair Scholars Program⁴ in the 1980s, which expanded TRIO support to include the pursuit of advanced degrees, which many high-shortage, high-demand professions require.

The Higher Education Act requires that, in working with students in grades 6 through 12, TS programs not only provide "high quality academic tutoring services," but also "assistance in preparing for college entrance examinations and completing college admission applications" as well as support in identifying appropriate financial aid and scholarships (20 U.S.C. § 1070a-12(b)). Similarly, the law requires that EOC programs assist adult learners in re-entering the education community by equipping them with the supports necessary to succeed in postsecondary education, including through the application, admissions and financial aid processes (20 U.S.C. 1070a-16(a)).

¹ [2026-05655.pdf](#)

² [2026-06456.pdf](#)

³ [COMPS-765.pdf](#)

⁴ [eCFR :: 34 CFR Part 647 -- Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program](#)

The Department of Education's March 17 grant competition announcement for the TRIO TS program and the March 30 grant competition announcement for the TRIO EOC program would significantly shift the purpose and structure of these programs from postsecondary access and success to a focus on workforce training. Extensive workforce training programs, which this delegation strongly supports, already exist. Our efforts to support workforce training have resulted in robust annual appropriations for Perkins Career and Technical Education Act programs, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs, and other programs that address the workforce needs of the Nation. TRIO serves an important complementary purpose to those workforce programs, especially for first-generation college students and students from low-income backgrounds, by supporting them in preparing for and succeeding in the postsecondary education of their choice as they pursue their goals.

Your effort to change the TRIO program focus and funding from postsecondary education access and success risks diluting the programs' effectiveness and potentially limits students' options. Students from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds need more, not less, support to achieve their college dreams.

We also are concerned that the March 2026 announcements reveal the intent of the Department to reduce the number of TS and EOC grantees and move away from a locally driven model grounded in the strength of community relationships, experience, and knowledge. The announcements also make arbitrary and unnecessary changes to per student expenditures. These unnecessary per student expense caps will hamstring TRIO programs from providing the tailored and individualized structural support that contribute to student success. By diluting the program mission, moving away from the locally driven model, and unnecessarily tying the hands of programs that know their students best, you will effectively erode the success of TRIO programs nationwide.

As the Congressional delegation representing New Hampshire, including the thousands of students supported by the eight TRIO programs in the Granite State and the 25 communities served by those programs, we request your immediate attention to this matter. We urge the Department of Education to rescind, revise and re-issue the March 2026 TS and EOC grant announcements to advance the mission of the TRIO programs as Congress intended. We request that you ensure there is no lapse in TRIO program operations during this competition revision process. We also request that current TRIO TS and EOC grantees in good standing receive a one-year extension of their grants to ensure uninterrupted service to the hundreds of thousands of students and families that rely on their services. Thank you for your due consideration, and we look forward to receiving your timely response.

Sincerely,




Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



Maggie Goodlander
Member of Congress