



Reaching English Learners Act

119TH CONGRESS



Background Information

English Learners (ELs) make up 10.6% of the nation's K-12 population, totaling over 5 million public school students. This diverse demographic spans one in ten students nationwide, including native speakers of Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic, and many other languages.

Instructing English Learners (ELs) requires a specialized skillset and unique teaching strategies. However, the U.S. Department of Education reports that **32 states and the District of Columbia** lack enough qualified EL educators. The difficulties in instructing this growing population results in a stark academic achievement gap. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the high school graduation rate for ELs sits at just 68 percent, compared to 85 percent for their non-EL peers.

The Reaching English Learners Act would address this deficit by **funding EL teacher preparation programs under Title II Part B of the Higher Education Act**. Under the program, grants must be given to partnerships between (1) certain institutions of higher education, and (2) high-need local educational agencies or high-need early childhood education 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, and recipients would be required to report on the effectiveness of the program to the Department of Education.



Five Reasons to Support the Reaching English Learners Act

1. Addresses learning disparities by investing in a pipeline for qualified English Learner (EL) educators.
2. Equips teachers with advanced strategies to help students attain higher levels of English literacy.
3. Trains educators to accurately assess learning disabilities, correcting service mismatches for EL students.
4. Integrates vital training in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), dual-language instruction, and family-community engagement.
5. Builds a modern education system that accurately reflects and fully supports our nation's diverse student population.

The Reaching English Learners Act is endorsed by several organizations, including:

- Joint National Committee for Languages
- National Council for Languages and International Studies
- National Association of Bilingual Education
- National Education Association
- American Federation of Teachers