

MAJORITY MEMBERS:

TIM WALBERG, MICHIGAN, *Chairman*

JOE WILSON, SOUTH CAROLINA
VIRGINIA FOXX, NORTH CAROLINA
GLENN THOMPSON, PENNSYLVANIA
GLENN GROTHMAN, WISCONSIN
ELISE M. STEFANIK, NEW YORK
RICK W. ALLEN, GEORGIA
JAMES COMER, KENTUCKY
BURGESS OWENS, UTAH
LISA C. MCCLAIN, MICHIGAN
MARY E. MILLER, ILLINOIS
JULIA LETLOW, LOUISIANA
KEVIN KILEY, CALIFORNIA
MICHAEL RULLI, OHIO
JAMES C. MOYLAN, GUAM
ROBERT F. ONDER, JR., MISSOURI
RYAN MACKENZIE, PENNSYLVANIA
MICHAEL BAUMGARTNER, WASHINGTON
MARK HARRIS, NORTH CAROLINA
MARK B. MESSMER, INDIANA
RANDY FINE, FLORIDA



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2176 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6100

MINORITY MEMBERS:

ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT, VIRGINIA,
Ranking Member

JOE COURTNEY, CONNECTICUT
FREDERICA S. WILSON, FLORIDA
SUZANNE BONAMICI, OREGON
MARK TAKANO, CALIFORNIA
ALMA S. ADAMS, NORTH CAROLINA
MARK DESAULNIER, CALIFORNIA
DONALD NORCROSS, NEW JERSEY
LUCY MCBATH, GEORGIA
JAHANA HAYES, CONNECTICUT
ILHAN OMAR, MINNESOTA
HALEY STEVENS, MICHIGAN
GREG CASAR, TEXAS
SUMMER L. LEE, PENNSYLVANIA
JOHN MANNION, NEW YORK
YASSAMIN ANSARI, ARIZONA

October 17, 2025

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

**RE: Comments on Proposed Priority and Definitions—Secretary’s Supplemental Priority
on Promoting Patriotic Education [Docket ID ED–2025–OS–0745]**

Dear Secretary McMahon:

We write to express strong opposition to the proposed Supplemental Priority on Promoting Patriotic Education [Docket ID ED–2025–OS–0745].¹ The proposed priority would direct discretionary grant funding toward projects that provide “an introduction to and understanding of the founding documents and primary sources of the American political tradition, in a manner consistent with the principles of a patriotic education.”² It is well understood that civics education is a vital component of a well-functioning democracy. However, the details of this proposal raise serious concerns.

First, the federal government does not and cannot control curriculum. Congress has repeatedly reiterated this boundary through multiple statutes, including the *Department of Education Organization Act*³ and the *General Education Provisions Act*⁴, which prohibit federal interference in curriculum, instructional content, and educational programs. In fact, it is worth noting that

¹ U.S. Dep’t of Educ., Proposed Priority and Definitions—Secretary’s Supplemental Priority on Promoting Patriotic Education, 90 Fed. Reg. 44788 (Sept. 17, 2025).

² *Id.*

³ 20 U.S.C. § 3403.

⁴ 20 U.S.C. § 1232a.

during his first term, President Trump issued a related executive order with the stated goal of “enforcing” the statutory prohibitions on federal control of education.⁵ The federal government’s role through the Department of Education is to, as the agency’s mission states, “to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access”, not take actions that would in any way have the appearance of controlling curriculum.⁶ Nevertheless, the Department’s current proposal would insert this Administration’s preferences of a particular understanding of American history in curriculum, professional development, and educational programs.

Second, the proposal would not only attempt to dictate potential grantees curriculum, but it also includes a concerning definition for the meaning of “patriotic education”. The proposed definition calls for a presentation of American history that is “unifying, inspiring, and ennobling,” and asserts that commitment to America’s aspirations is “beneficial and justified.”⁷ This framing creates the potential for schools that teach accurate and complex histories of slavery, Indigenous displacement, the Women’s Suffrage Movement, and the Civil Rights Movement to be limited in their ability to access certain discretionary grants. Promoting a singular interpretation of American history that valorizes national ideals without reckoning with historical injustices undermines the integrity of civics education.

Finally, the proposed priority arrives amid concerning decisions from the Administration around civics education. According to recent reports, 19 of the approximately 26 recipients of federal American History and Civics grants were issued non-continuation notices, effectively defunding their work, because the Department claimed, without further explanation the projects did not align with the Administration’s standards of “merit, fairness, and excellence” and also claimed that some of the projects may have violated civil rights laws.⁸ Additionally, last month the Department announced a partnership with 40 conservative leaning groups for the America 250 Civics Education Coalition.⁹ Some of these groups have expressed contempt for the teaching of history that does not align with the version of history they believe students should learn, and these same groups would prefer to limit children’s access to materials that depict the realities of slavery in America or the Civil Rights Movement.¹⁰ All these decisions risk further marginalizing students in historically disenfranchised groups and inadequately preparing our children for the future without an accurate understanding of America’s past.

⁵ Executive Order No. 13,791, *Enforcing Statutory Prohibitions on Federal Control of Education*, 82 Fed. Reg. 20,437 (May 1, 2017), available at <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/executive-order-13791-enforcing-statutory-prohibitions-federal-control-education>.

⁶ U.S. Dep’t of Educ., *Federal Role in Education*, <https://www.ed.gov/about/ed-overview/federal-role-in-education> (last visited Oct. 9, 2025).

⁷ U.S. Dep’t of Educ., *supra* note 1, at 44789.

⁸ Mark Lieberman, *Civics Education Grants Slashed by U.S. Department of Education*, Education Week (Sept. 16, 2025) <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/trump-admin-cancels-dozens-more-grants-hitting-civics-arts-and-higher-ed/2025/09>.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ See e.g. Lileana Pearson, *PragerU Kids Slavery Video Sparks Debate Over Educational Content in Texas Schools* (Aug. 25, 2023), <https://abc13.com/post/prageru-kids-slavery-video-educational-videos-for-controversial-material-texas-education/13687315/>; Andrew Stranton, *Tennessee Education Dept. Rejects Complaint That MLK Book Is ‘Anti-White Teaching’*, Newsweek (Nov. 29, 2021), <https://www.newsweek.com/tennessee-education-dept-rejects-complaint-that-mlk-book-anti-white-teaching-1654172>.

Therefore, we urge the Department to withdraw the proposed priority for discretionary grant funding. Civics education should be inclusive, historically accurate, and locally governed. Any federal effort to support civics education must uphold the legal boundaries that protect curriculum from federal overreach and not encourage teaching only one side of history.

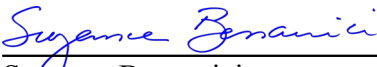
Sincerely,



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Ranking Member
House Committee on
Education and Workforce



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



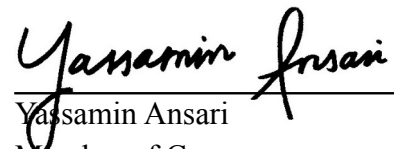
Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath
Member of Congress



Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress