

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 19, 2026

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

Dear Secretary McMahon:

We are writing to urge you to issue a notice inviting applications as soon as possible for two competitive grant programs that support agricultural farmworker students: the High School Equivalency Program (HEP) and the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). These are important programs serving farmworker and rural communities that enjoy longstanding bipartisan support. HEP and CAMP will be best positioned to achieve statutory requirements through timely execution actions by the Department of Education.

As you likely know, HEP and CAMP programs provide critical access to educational opportunities for students from migrant or seasonal farmworker families. HEP helps students who have dropped out of high school get their High School Equivalency Credential and serves more than 6,000 students annually. CAMP assists students in their first year of college with academic, personal, and financial support, and serves approximately 2,400 migrant participants annually. Overall, nearly three-quarters of all CAMP students graduate with baccalaureate degrees.

Congress annually appropriates funding for HEP and CAMP programs on a bipartisan basis, and the FY26 Consolidated Appropriations Act, which President Trump signed into law, appropriated \$52.1 million for the grants authorized under these programs.

Notably, the Senate Report accompanying the FY26 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, which carries forward in the explanatory statement accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026, directs the federal government to ensure the timely execution of all grants. The report reads: “it is critical that the Federal grant making process is implemented in a timely, efficient, and consistent manner. The Committee directs the Departments funded in this act . . . to ensure that funding opportunity announcements are posted, non-competing continuation awards are made, new grants are awarded, and funding is disbursed all in a timely, efficient, and consistent manner.”

The aforementioned Senate Report also contains explicit language directing the Department to administer HEP and CAMP in a timely manner. More specifically, the report says: “The Committee urges the Department to accelerate the program development timeline so notices inviting applications can be issued early enough for the Department to make new and non-competing continuation awards before July 1.” In order for the Department to make this July 1

deadline, we urge the Department to issue notices inviting applications as soon as possible with a 60-day deadline for grantees to apply.

Unfortunately, in FY25, the Department of Education cancelled the competition that was underway for the HEP and CAMP programs, which resulted in the elimination of 30 existing programs that were competing for another 5-year grant. The Department also discontinued 13 mid-cycle grants that had been approved, which negatively impacted programs. As such, for the HEP and CAMP programs that did not receive funding due to the cancelled FY25 competition or were discontinued, we urge the Department to afford these programs prior experience points in the event they submit a grant in a new FY26 grant competition.

The Department of Education currently has significant funding available this fiscal year to administer robust grant competitions. The Department created the situation when it chose to front-load awards for certain grantees for future budget years of approved applications and cancelled the competition underway for HEP and CAMP programs.

HEP and CAMP programs have a 50+ year legacy of supporting students from farmworker and rural backgrounds so they can earn their High School Equivalency Diploma and succeed in college, thereby contributing to our country's economic workforce. We are deeply concerned that any delays in administering the HEP and CAMP programs will result in irreversible damage to our students, families, and communities.

Therefore, we urge the Department of Education to follow the letter and spirit of the law by posting notices inviting applications as soon as possible to ensure that the HEP and CAMP programs are able to continue their vital work. We appreciate your support in positively impacting countless more students' lives by following the recent appropriations law and helping keep these important programs working to support farm-working families and communities.

Sincerely,

  
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

  
Alex Padilla  
United States Senator

  
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

  
Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

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Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



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Ben Ray Lujan  
United States Senator



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Adam B. Schiff  
United States Senator



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Elissa Slotkin  
United States Senator



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Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator



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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator