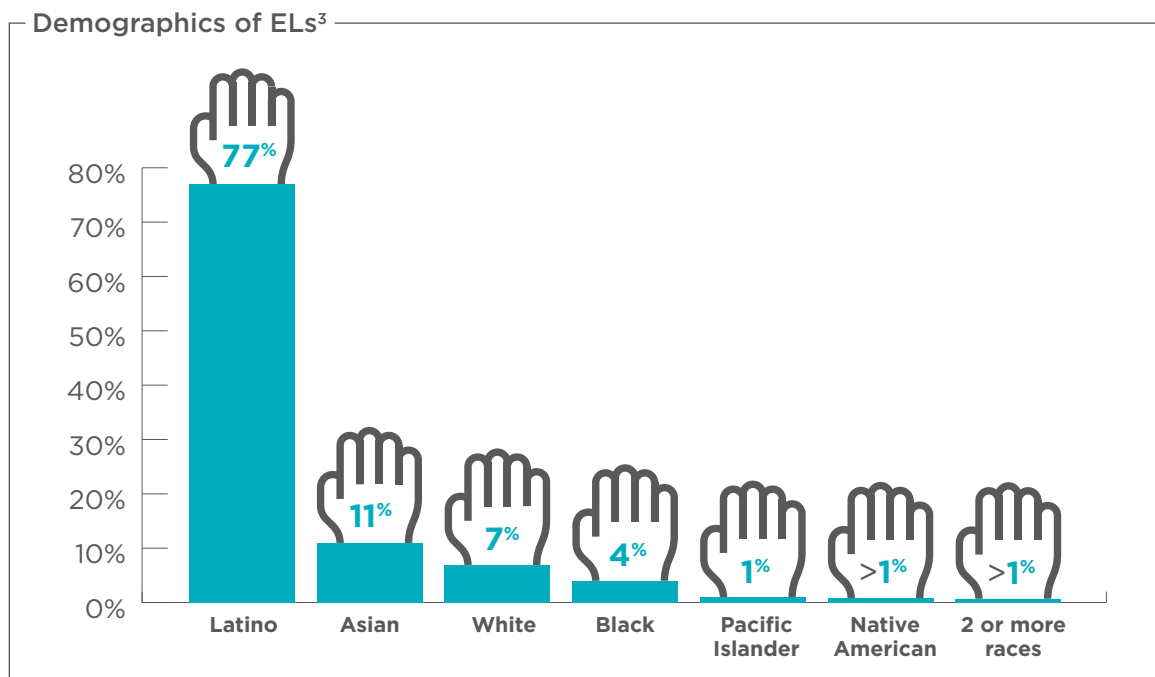


## Supporting English Learners:

# FY22 Federal Budget Recommendations

English learners (ELs) comprise 10% of the U.S. K-12 public school population and are one of the fastest-growing student populations. The number of ELs in the United States grew 28% between the 2000–01 school year and the 2016–17 school year, and as of 2017 there were five million ELs enrolled in public schools.<sup>1</sup> While federal funding to support the education of ELs across the country was first established in 1968 through the Bilingual Education Act, and later evolved into its current form of Title III in the 2002 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, federal funding has not kept up with the growth in the population of ELs.<sup>2</sup>



Research shows that ELs perform better when they have access to qualified teachers, high-quality learning materials (including digital curriculum), and schools with adequate levels of financial resources. These resources, however, are drastically lacking for ELs. Moreover, when ELs have access to these resources, evidence indicates that these factors contribute to reducing opportunity gaps (e.g., low enrollment in

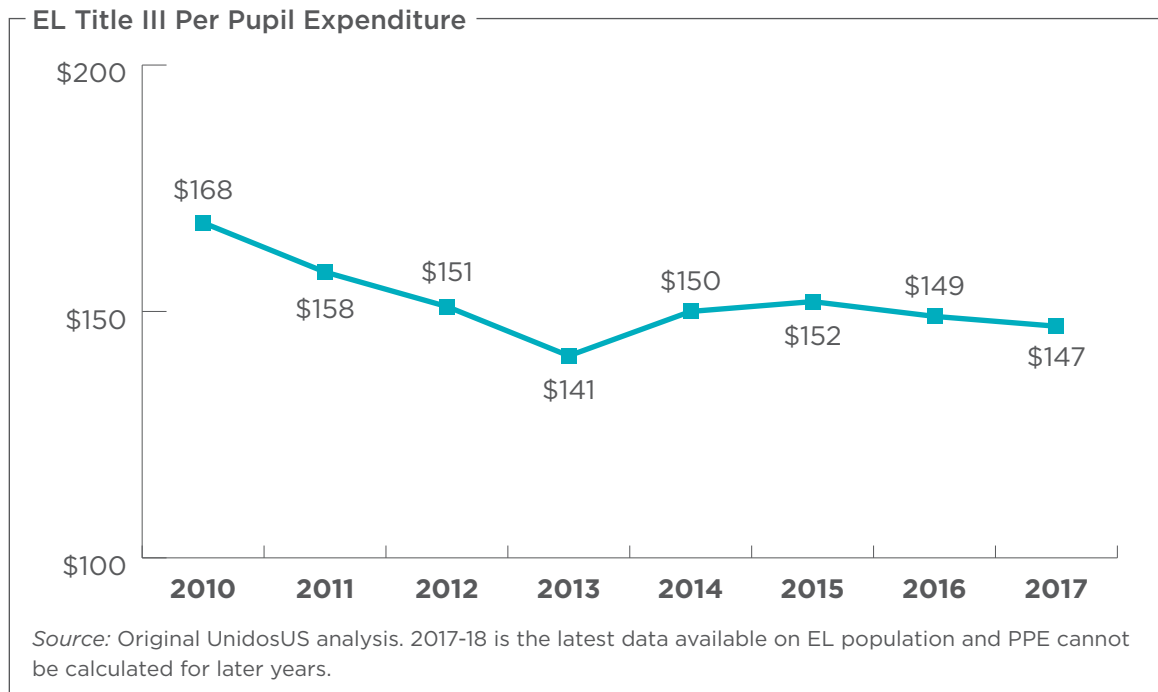
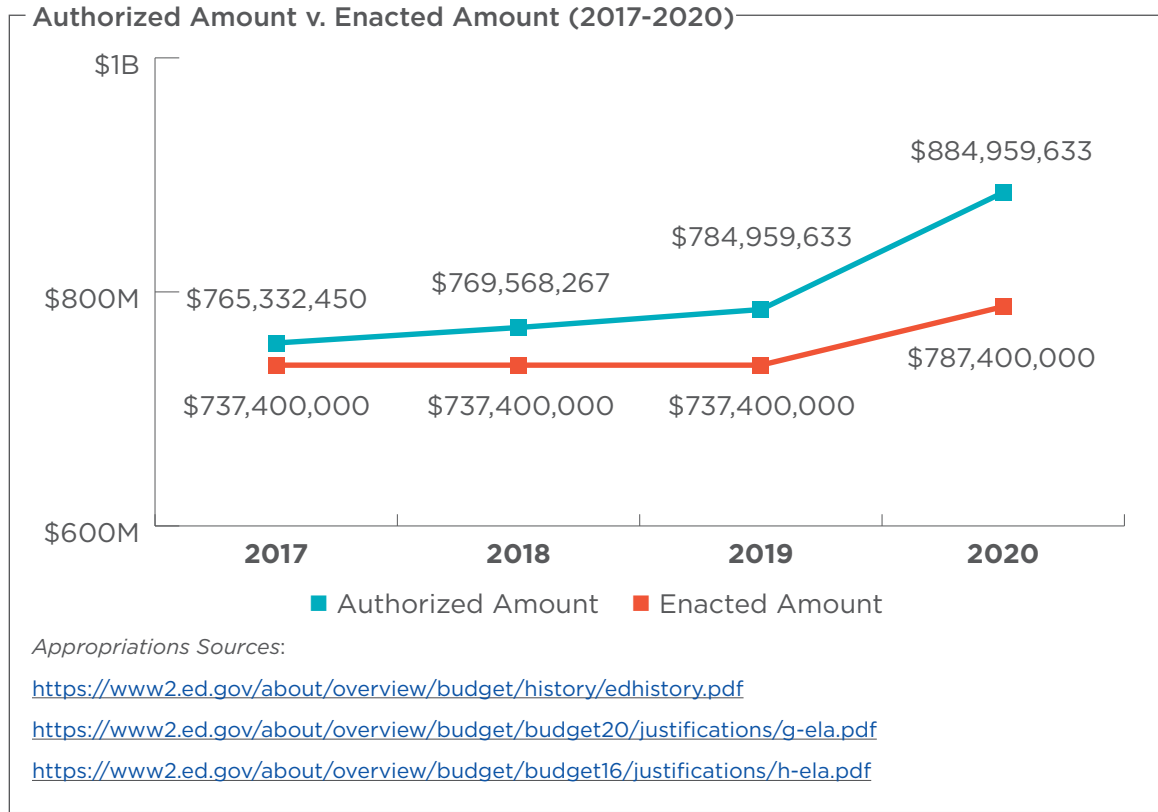
advanced placement classes, low graduation rates, low college attendance rates) experienced by ELs.<sup>4</sup>

Coupled with the disparate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on high-need student populations, ELs, in particular, need additional targeted resources, ranging from tutoring, summer and after-school programs, and multilingual language development services to social and emotional support for challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. A federal monthly survey of pandemic learning shows that 51% of eighth grade ELs continue to be in remote learning compared to 40% of all students.<sup>5</sup> Local education agencies (LEAs) and state education agencies (SEAs) require not only additional funding for these services, but also expert technical assistance for ELs and general guidance from the U.S. Department of Education.

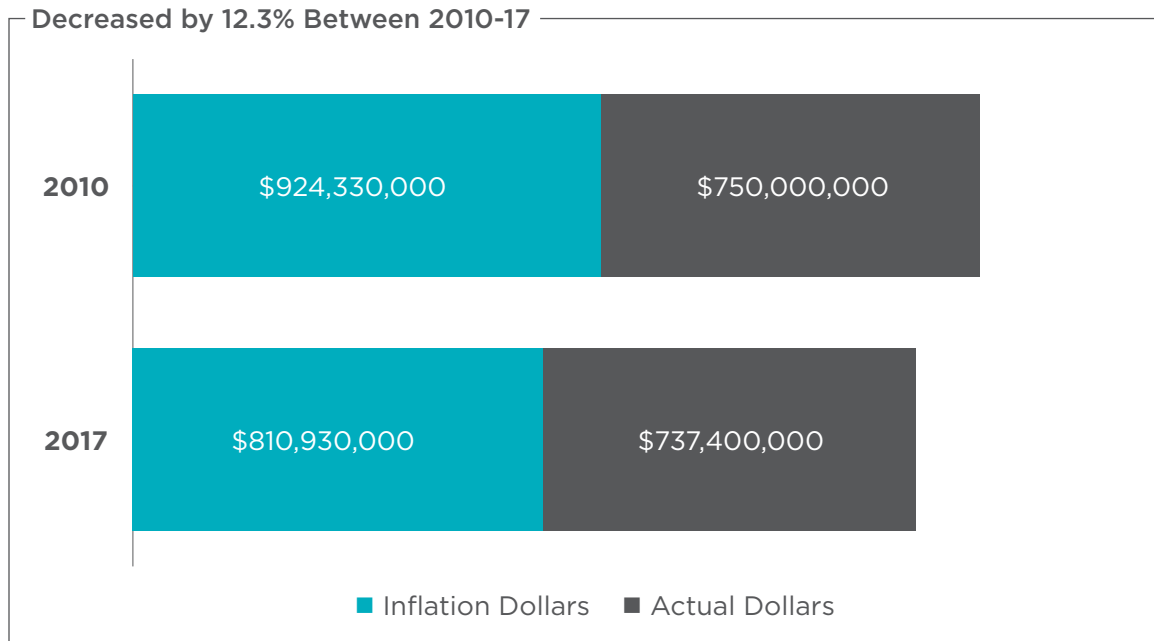
Although more data is needed on the impact of COVID-19 and ELs, available data shows ELs have experienced key challenges.<sup>6</sup> There is a myriad of reasons students may have been unable to participate in distance learning, ranging from a lack of access to devices and high-speed internet to housing insecurity to the inability of parents and/or guardians to aid with distance learning. An estimated 60% of ELs come from “low-income families in which parents have ‘disproportionately’ limited levels of education,”<sup>7</sup> and according to the U.S. Department of Education, ELs are more likely to be homeless students than the general student population. Therefore, ELs are some of the students most likely to have been affected by the switch to remote learning and the digital divide.<sup>8</sup>

A report co-released by the Alliance for Excellent Education, National Indian Education Association, National Urban League, and UnidosUS found that one in three families who earn less than \$50,000 annually do not have high-speed home internet and that one in three Latino families lack high-speed internet access.<sup>9</sup> Nearly four million (77%) of ELs are Latino—a statistic that shows how impacted ELs have been by the pandemic.<sup>10</sup> In a survey by Next 100, more than half of teachers reported that only a few or some of their EL students had the technology they needed to participate in online learning, and 72% said that only a few or some of their EL students have reliable or stable internet access. In addition, 67% of educators said their students are not doing well and 64% reported not feeling well-supported by their schools, districts, or charter networks.<sup>11,12</sup>

Adequate funding is crucial for EL success, yet funding has been relatively flat since the inception of Title III in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002 fluctuating between \$664 million in 2002 and \$737 million in 2019. In 2002, Title III was authorized to provide \$750 million for the academic and linguistic education of ELs.<sup>13</sup> The subsequent ESEA reauthorization—the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015—authorized Title III funding to increase to \$884 million by 2020. The most recent Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY21 provided \$797 million for Title III, which is the highest funding level Title III has achieved to date, but still short of ESSA’s authorized amount. Even if Congress had funded Title III at the authorized level of \$884,959,633, this would leave schools with only \$177 per pupil for the five million ELs enrolled in U.S. public schools. The lack of adequate Title III funding has a disproportionate impact on Latino students and other students of color who represent the EL student population.



The EL population is rapidly growing and in need of equitable federal investments. Although the federal budget has appropriated some modest increases for Title III, when adjusting for inflation, Title III funding has decreased by 12.3% since 2010.<sup>14</sup> If Title III funding continues to fail to keep up with the rate of EL growth, millions of students will be denied a high-quality education and will be inhibited from reaching their full potential and contributing to the United States’ economy.



Historically, ELs have been overlooked, and investments in this key student population have been inadequate for years. Before the Title III funding program was created, decisions on ELs were made by local educational agencies (LEAs), and even after the implementation of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, funding was “nothing more than a modest grant-in-aid program designed to promote research and experimentation in bilingual education.”<sup>15</sup> There were no mandates to offer bilingual education if LEAs did not accept federal funds and the amount of money offered, merely \$15 million in 1968, did not incentivize many school districts to do so.<sup>16</sup>

While COVID-19 relief funding provides resources for states to address the needs of all students, including ELs, Title III is the only federal grant program that is specifically targeted to support ELs. Increasing Title III funding would help to rectify years of underinvestment and provide for more equitable funding for one of the highest-need student populations.

## Recommendations

In order to improve the academic progress of EL students, increase graduation and college going rates, and meet the social and emotional needs of EL students, UnidosUS urges Congress to consider the following:

- **Appropriate \$2 billion for Title III in the FY22 budget.** Funding Title III at this level would result in \$400/per pupil, as well as fund several programs:
  - \$100 million to create a discretionary grant program for the development and adoption of native language assessments to leverage the full repertoire of linguistic, cultural, and cognitive resources that ELs bring to school and to better inform equitable and higher-level instruction.
  - Professional development for teachers of ELs.
  - Pre-service support for teacher preparation programs.

- Culturally and linguistically responsive engagement and communication with EL families.
- Community and family initiatives to support after-school academic and social programs for ELs.
- Sustainable innovative programs that support bilingual and dual language education and leverage the unique linguistic, cultural, and cognitive capital of ELs to promote higher levels of academic and socio-emotional outcomes.
- **Reassign administration of the Title III formula grants program to the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA).** Years ago, Title III was moved from OELA to the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) to provide greater coordination of assessments and accountability between Title I and Title III. However, the bifurcation of this system was addressed in 2015 with ESSA’s passage, which moved assessment and accountability for ELs to Title I. Still, states rely on federal technical assistance in crafting and administering their state and local plans under Title III of the ESEA and need timely, accurate guidance. OELA already disseminates research and resources for teaching ELs and has the expertise needed to provide critical technical assistance to states. If properly resourced to meet staffing needs, OELA would be well positioned to provide this guidance and ensure Title III program quality.
- **Rename the OELA to move from deficit to asset-based language that recognizes the strengths that ELs bring to the learning environment.** The name of the office was last amended in 2002 and would require amending [Section 1072\(b\)](#) of the Department of Education Organization Act.\* Some options to consider include: Office of Multilingual Education and Support, Office of Bilingual Education, Office of Multilingual Support, and Office of Bilingual Education and Multilingual Support.

## About UnidosUS

UnidosUS, previously known as NCLR (National Council of La Raza), is the nation’s largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an [Affiliate Network](#) of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos at the national and local levels.

For more than 50 years, UnidosUS has united communities and different groups seeking common ground through collaboration, and that share a desire to make our country stronger. For more information on UnidosUS, visit [www.unidosus.org](http://www.unidosus.org), or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

\* Pub. L. 107-110, title X, § 1072(b), (c)(2)(A), (d), Jan. 8, 2002, 115 Stat. 2089. [https://word-edit.officeapps.live.com/we/wordeditorframe.aspx?ui=en%252DUS&rs=en%252DUS&wopisrc=https%253A%252F%252F-nclr-my.sharepoint.com%252Fpersonal%252Fkevans\\_unidosus\\_org%252F\\_vti\\_bin%252Fwopi.ashx%252F-files%252F2348a0fc0ad240529be0d6dc32a4bc08&wdenableroaming=1&wdfr=1&mscc=1&wdodb=1&id=00000000-0000-0000-0000-000000000000&wdorigin=Sharing&jsapi=1&jsapiver=v1&newses-ion=1&corrid=d4f6c664-8368-454c-8123-e2472b301bbf&usid=d4f6c664-8368-454c-8123-e2472b301bbf&sftc=1&mtf=1&sfp=1&instantedit=1&wopicomplete=1&wdredirectionreason=Unified\\_SingleFlush&rct=Medium&ctp=LeastProtected%23\\_ftn1](https://word-edit.officeapps.live.com/we/wordeditorframe.aspx?ui=en%252DUS&rs=en%252DUS&wopisrc=https%253A%252F%252F-nclr-my.sharepoint.com%252Fpersonal%252Fkevans_unidosus_org%252F_vti_bin%252Fwopi.ashx%252F-files%252F2348a0fc0ad240529be0d6dc32a4bc08&wdenableroaming=1&wdfr=1&mscc=1&wdodb=1&id=00000000-0000-0000-0000-000000000000&wdorigin=Sharing&jsapi=1&jsapiver=v1&newses-ion=1&corrid=d4f6c664-8368-454c-8123-e2472b301bbf&usid=d4f6c664-8368-454c-8123-e2472b301bbf&sftc=1&mtf=1&sfp=1&instantedit=1&wopicomplete=1&wdredirectionreason=Unified_SingleFlush&rct=Medium&ctp=LeastProtected%23_ftn1).

## Endnotes

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