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AND INTELLIGENCE

December 17, 2025

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

Dear Secretary McMahon:

I write to express grave concerns over the Department of Education's recent decision to terminate Paterson, New Jersey School District's Full-Service Community School ("FSCS") FY 2022 and FY 2023 grants. This unfounded decision will cause catastrophic harm to students and impede their ability to succeed in and out of the classroom. I am demanding that the Department of Education reconsider this decision and reverse course before it is too late.

As you know, the FSCS program was initially created in 2008 as a way to support and improve academic and wrap-around services for children and their families, particularly those living in high-poverty school districts and communities.¹ These grants have helped provide vital programs and assistance that students would not otherwise receive, including social, health, nutrition, and mental health services, early childhood education programs, juvenile crime prevention and rehabilitation programs, as well as educational school-to-career pipeline programs ensuring our country has a strong next generation of workers.

Despite the profound impact FSCS grants have had on students and their families, on December 15, the Education Department "abruptly canceled tens of millions of dollars in grants just two weeks before their next round of funding was set to arrive."² One of those recipients is located within my district: Paterson School District. The city of Paterson is one of the poorest in our entire state, with roughly 29% of its residents living below the poverty level—nearly 16% higher than the national average. Moreover, roughly 41% of Paterson's children are

¹ See Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008, Pub. L. 110-161 (2007).

² *Federal Funds for Community Schools Fall Victim to a New Round of Trump Cuts*, Education Week (Dec. 15, 2025), www.edweek.org/policy-politics/federal-funds-for-community-schools-fall-victim-to-a-new-round-of-trump-cuts/2025/12.

impoverished and do not receive sufficient food on a regular basis.³ Historic underinvestment has resulted in roughly one-quarter of residents over age 25 never completing high school, while only one-eighth hold a bachelor's degree or higher.⁴ These statistics emphasize the need for resources and programs to change course and help students and their families have a chance to succeed.

Under its FSCS program, Paterson has taken an all-hands approach to change this situation for students and families.⁵ Through the FY 2022 and FY 2023 FSCS grants, Paterson has created and expanded programs across eight different schools to support the whole development and care of students: Passaic MLK School No. 6; Passaic High School; Joseph A Taub Middle School; Paterson International High School; Paterson Eastside High School; Paterson School No. 16; Paterson School 6; and Alonzo T. Moody Academy High School. For example, Paterson established (1) a school-based health center that provides medical, mental, and behavioral health services and (2) a food distribution program at each school to provide consistent and nutritious food to supplement children in need.⁶ FSCS funds have also provided (1) resources for teen parents to prevent chronic absenteeism and possible drop-out of high school, (2) afterschool tutoring programs, (3) summer bridge programs for kindergarten and sixth and ninth grades to prepare incoming students for the new school experience, (4) programs for crime prevention and anti-bullying, (5) adult and basic skills and technology education and parenting workshops, (6) expanded Mindful Schools Professional Development programming and advanced course options for teachers.⁷ These programs are made available to individuals based on need. The consideration of any other factors would not only take away resources from those who are unable to access these services on their own, but minimize the entire intent of Congress in creating the FSCS program in the first place.

The Education Department's decision to strip nearly \$8 million in FSCS funding from these schools not only endangers the academic success of our future generation but also poses

³ U.S. Dep't of Ed., Full-Service Community Schools Program (FSCS), *Paterson Board of Education FY 2023 Grant Application Narrative* (last accessed Dec. 17, 2025), www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/2023/12/20_S215J230159-Paterson-Board-of-Education-Narrative.pdf (hereinafter FY2023 Paterson FSCS Narrative).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ See, e.g., *This is How a Program that Sends Pediatricians to Paterson Schools is Set to Expand Paterson*, North Jersey (Jan. 27, 2023), www.northjersey.com/story/news/paterson-press/2023/01/27/paterson-nj-full-service-community-school-program-expans/69844154007/; *Expanding Full Service Community Schools Program through Partnership with Montclair State University*, CBS (Feb. 23, 2023), www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/paterson-n-j-expands-full-service-community-schools-program-partnership-with-montclair-state-university/.

⁶ Paterson FY2023 FSCS Narrative, *supra*, note 4; U.S. Dep't of Ed., *Paterson Board of Education FY 2022 Grant Application Narrative*, Full-Service Community Schools Program (FSCS), (last accessed Dec. 17, 2025), www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/2023/12/20_S215J230159-Paterson-Board-of-Education-Narrative.pdf.

⁷ *Id.*

The Honorable Secretary McMahon

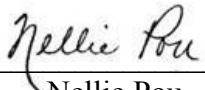
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enormous health and wellness risks given the range of services currently being offered to students in one of the poorest cities in our state.

As the representative serving New Jersey's Ninth Congressional District, I cannot and will not stand idly while my constituents—and specifically, children—risk losing access to food, health care, and vital academic programming that charts them on a course for a better future. Therefore, I demand that the Education Department immediately review and reverse this decision. In addition, I am making myself available to you, Secretary McMahon, to meet and discuss this issue.

Sincerely,



Nellie Pou
Member of Congress