



State Leaders Must Invest in Bilingual Education to Guard Against Federal Funding Shortfalls

IDRA Testimony to the Texas House Public Education Committee on the Interim Charge Relating to Monitoring House Bill 2 (89R), Submitted by Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., June 1, 2026

Dear Chair Buckley and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Chloe Latham Sikes, and I am deputy director of policy at IDRA, an independent, non-partisan non-profit committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

Texas educates one of every five emergent bilingual students in the United States. These students are central to the future workforce, economy, and civic life of Texas. As federal support becomes uncertain, Texas has both an opportunity and a responsibility to lead.

This committee passed bold reforms to bilingual education during the last session. For the first time in over 40 years, this committee invested in the **over 1 million emergent bilingual students in Texas public schools** by raising the bilingual education allotment from 10% to 12% additional per-pupil funding in House Bill 2. This funding would have directly benefited high-quality bilingual education programs, which are critical to early literacy gains, college and career readiness, and workforce development. This committee also passed legislation (HB 1581, 89R) that would have strengthened bilingual education program monitoring, technical assistance and educator training to better serve emergent bilingual students.

While those measures did not make it into law, they took necessary steps to ensure all Texas public school students can get a quality public education in the language they understand.

This committee can build on that progress to guard against federal funding cuts to bilingual education.

The federal budget proposal for fiscal year 2027 eliminates ESEA Title III, Part A funding and the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). OELA was specifically established to ensure Title III funds benefited English learner (or emergent bilingual) students and supported their academic success. OELA offered educator training and professional development, technical assistance for school districts and classrooms, family engagement resources, literacy materials, evidence-based best practices, and other research and educational support to states to meet federal requirements for English language proficiency and achievement (see National English Learner Roundtable, 2026). Research consistently shows that high-quality bilingual education programs improve long-term academic achievement, graduation rates, biliteracy, and workforce readiness for students.

The federal justification for these cuts is to hand more control to the states. The proposed cuts mean Texas schools can **expect the loss of nearly \$140 million** in federal funds for educating emergent bilingual students, or **over 16%** of the total bilingual education funds. This could lead to significant losses in teacher preparation and professional development, quality bilingual programs like dual language immersion, and student achievement. Federal funding cuts do not eliminate the educational rights or needs of emergent bilingual students. Texas must ensure students continue to have appropriate funding for meaningful access to instruction and high-quality programs.

Recommendations

IDRA recommends that this committee consider the following actions in the 90th legislative session:

- Invest in targeted funding and allotments, including by raising the bilingual education allotment weight by at least 0.02, per the House version of HB 2 (89R).
- Strengthen state support for bilingual education program monitoring, technical assistance and educator training, including for school districts using dual language funds, through legislation like HB 1581 (89R).
- Raise the basic allotment and All Basic Costs allotments to continuously adjust for inflation.
- Support the certified bilingual teacher workforce through expanding grow-your-own programs and other early career opportunities for aspiring bilingual teachers, securing bilingual teacher stipends, and directing resources to help uncertified bilingual educators become certified.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., deputy director of policy, at chloe.sikes@idra.org.

Resources

National English Learner Roundtable. (March 13, 2026). Letter to Secretary of ED Linda McMahon Re: OELA.

https://unidosus.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/unidosus_NELR-letter-to-ED-re-OELA_05.13.2026.pdf

TEA. (2025). Emergent Bilingual Students in Texas Fact Sheet #1 - Statistics. Texas Education Agency.

<https://www.txel.org/media/hxcfvqe/factsheet1-statistics.pdf>

U.S. Department of Education. (2026). English Language Acquisition State Grants; Title III, Part A.

<https://www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/formula-grants/formula-grants-special-populations/english-language-acquisition-state-grants-title-iii-part#funding-status-awards>

IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.