

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 19, 2026

Orice Williams Brown
Acting Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington DC, 20548

Dear Acting Comptroller General Brown:

We write to request a comprehensive investigation into the impacts of the Trump administration's interagency agreement (IAA) transferring significant responsibilities for career and technical education (CTE) and adult education grant administration from the Department of Education (ED) to the Department of Labor (DOL) as part of its stated efforts to dismantle ED.¹ We further request that your agency investigate the planning, implementation, and impact of the six additional IAAs announced on November 18, 2025, related to transferring significant responsibilities for grant administration for dozens of programs for early childhood, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education out of ED,² and any subsequent IAAs, as they are implemented.

We are deeply concerned that the administration's decisions to implement CTE and adult education grant programs in this manner delayed crucial funding that millions of students and schools rely on, created administrative inefficiencies, increased the cost of program administration, and compromised the quality of technical assistance provided to states and grantees.

CTE programs provide students with academic, technical, and employability skills and prepare them for postsecondary learning opportunities or work.³ This makes CTE a critical pathway to the middle class, especially for students facing socioeconomic barriers to well-paying jobs,⁴ which helps reduce income inequality.⁵ States use federal funding for CTE programs to close

¹ Chalkbeat, "Trump signs executive order that aims to close U.S. Department of Education," Erica Meltzer and Andrew Ujifusa, March 20, 2025, <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2025/03/20/trump-signs-executive-order-to-end-education-department>.

² U.S. Department of Education, "U.S. Department of Education Announces Six New Agency Partnerships to Break Up Federal Bureaucracy," press release, November 18, 2025, <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-announces-six-new-agency-partnerships-break-federal-bureaucracy>.

³ Congressional Research Service, "Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V): A Primer," Adam K. Edgerton, April 15, 2022, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R47071>.

⁴ Center for American Progress, "Building a Strong Middle Class Through Career Pathways Programs: Case Studies of Germany, Singapore, and Switzerland," Laura Jiminez, May 18, 2020, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/building-strong-middle-class-career-pathways-programs>.

⁵ Milken Institute, "Career Technical Education: Reducing Wage Inequality and Sustaining California's Innovation-Based Economy," Ross Devol, July 25, 2016, <https://milkeninstitute.org/content-hub/research-and-reports/reports/career-technical-education-reducing-wage-inequality-and-sustaining-californias-innovation-based>.

racial and gender equity gaps within CTE.⁶ Congress unambiguously authorized and appropriated funding for CTE to ED.⁷ In 2018, Congress reauthorized the *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act* (Perkins V).⁸ By requiring that federally funded CTE programs integrate both academic and technical skills,⁹ the passage of Perkins V reaffirmed the importance of integrating career and technical education into the education system and our nation’s public schools, not purely viewing these programs as job training. Congress appropriated over \$1.4 billion in Perkins V grant funding to ED for Fiscal Year 2026;¹⁰ this funding is critical to the education of the roughly 11 million students who participate in CTE programs around the country.¹¹

Adult education programs provide adults—often, those without a high school degree or who are English language learners—with foundational literacy, math, and problem-solving skills.¹² In addition to expanding access to affordable education, these programs are a critical pathway to the middle class and can play a key role in reducing poverty and enabling employment.¹³ Congress annually appropriates funding to ED to support adult education programs under the *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act* (AEFLA), providing over \$700 million in funding in 2026.¹⁴ In 2024, AEFLA served 1.3 million adult students.¹⁵

ED’s Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) is responsible for administering grant programs under Perkins V and AEFLA.¹⁶ Specifically, ED is responsible for

⁶ Education Commission of the States, “Perkins V: Tackling Gender Disparities in CTE,” Claus von Zastrow, January 16, 2019, <https://www.ecs.org/perkins-v-tackling-gender-disparities-in-cte>; Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, “Breaking Barriers in Career and Technical Education: Centering Black Students in Perkins Reauthorization,” Justin Nalley, Araceli Chavez, and Kayla C. Elliott, December 3, 2025, <https://jointcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Breaking-Barriers-in-Career-and-Technical-Education-Centering-Black-Students-in-Perkins-Reauthorization.pdf>.

⁷ Letter from U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee Vice Chair Murray, U.S. House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member DeLauro, et al. to Education Secretary McMahon, June 18, 2025, https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/250618_letter_to_ed_on_cte_transfer_attempt.pdf.

⁸ Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, Public Law 115-224.

⁹ Congressional Research Service, “Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V): A Primer,” Adam K. Edgerton, April 15, 2022, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R47071>.

¹⁰ U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, “Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2026,” https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/fy26_lhhs_bill_summary_conferenced.pdf.

¹¹ Advance CTE, “CTE In Your State,” <https://careertech.org/our-vision/cte-in-your-state>.

¹² New America, “Adult Education Pays for Itself. Why Does Trump Want to Gut it?,” Braden Goetz, May 7, 2025, <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/adult-education-pays-for-itself-why-does-trump-want-to-gut-it>; U.S. Department of Education, “Adult Education and Literacy,” <https://www.ed.gov/adult-education-and-services/adult-education-and-literacy-homepage>.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026, Public Law 119-75.

¹⁵ New America, “Adult Education Pays for Itself. Why Does Trump Want to Gut it?,” Braden Goetz, May 7, 2025, <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/adult-education-pays-for-itself-why-does-trump-want-to-gut-it>.

¹⁶ AEFLA, “Grants,” <https://aefla.ed.gov/grants>; U.S. Department of Education, “Career and Technical Education-- Title I (Basic Grants to States),” <https://www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/formula-grants/school-improvement-grants/career-and-technical-education-title-i-basic-grants-states>.

allocating Perkins V and AEFLA funds to states, and states in turn distribute funds to local CTE and adult education program providers.¹⁷

However, in May 2025, ED and DOL secretly signed an IAA under which DOL is to provide day-to-day administration of ED’s Perkins V and AEFLA programs.¹⁸ This was the first in a series of unprecedented IAAs through which the Trump administration has attempted to transfer ED’s statutory requirements to other agencies, with the political goal of illegally dismantling and eventually abolishing the Department.¹⁹ The Trump administration framed the OCTAE IAA as a measure to improve efficiency, reduce “duplication of effort,” and improve the quality of program administration.²⁰ But subsequent media reports document that the transition of OCTAE’s grant administration from ED to DOL has faced significant challenges—including technical problems, increased bureaucracy, and communication lapses.²¹ According to one report, many of these challenges have been linked to the transition from ED’s unified grants management system to DOL’s setup, in which two separate systems are used to administer grants.²² That same report also suggested that the launch of money-transfer processes for CTE programs was delayed by weeks.²³ Reporting also indicates that ED is paying DOL around \$1 million to cover the cost of DOL administering these programs during FY25 and FY26.²⁴ Separately, reporting suggests that ED’s November 2025 IAA moving other programs to DOL has slowed work due to IT issues and logistical challenges.²⁵

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Advance CTE, “ED Discloses Effort to Transfer CTE to DOL as it Proposes to Eliminate Support for Postsecondary CTE,” Rob Young, June 13, 2025, <https://careertech.org/blog/ed-discloses-effort-to-transfer-cte-to-dol-as-it-proposes-to-eliminate-support-for-postsecondary-cte>.

¹⁹ Center for American Progress, “Moving Federal Education Programs Will Create More Bureaucracy, Not Less,” Veronica Goodman, Viviann Anguiano, and Weadé James, December 10, 2025, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/moving-federal-education-programs-will-create-more-bureaucracy-not-less>; U.S. Department of Education, “Secretary McMahon: Our Department’s Final Mission,” Linda McMahon, March 3, 2025, <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/speech/secretary-mcmahon-our-departments-final-mission>.

²⁰ U.S. Department of Education, “U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Labor Implement Workforce Development Partnership,” press release, July 25, 2025, <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-and-us-department-of-labor-implement-workforce-development-partnership>.

²¹ Politico, “The Education Department gave another agency power to distribute its money. It hasn’t gone well.,” Juan Perez Jr., Nick Niedzwiedek, and Bianca Quilantan, November 24, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/11/24/the-education-department-gave-another-agency-power-to-distribute-money-it-hasnt-gone-smoothly-00663976>; Inside Higher Ed, “Closing Equity Gaps in Career and Technical Education,” Sara Weissman, December 9, 2025, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/diversity/race-ethnicity/2025/12/09/closing-equity-gaps-cte-programs-black-students>.

²² Politico, “The Education Department gave another agency power to distribute its money. It hasn’t gone well.,” Juan Perez Jr., Nick Niedzwiedek, and Bianca Quilantan, November 24, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/11/24/the-education-department-gave-another-agency-power-to-distribute-money-it-hasnt-gone-smoothly-00663976>.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ Politico Pro, “Education Department’s shutdown effort has workers ‘doing the same job’ at another agency,” Juan Perez Jr. and Rebecca Carballo, February 5, 2026, <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/2026/02/education-departments-shutdown-effort-has-workers-doing-the-same-job-at-another-agency-00766651>.

These reports raise concerns that the transfer of adult education and CTE program funding to DOL has resulted in administrative failures and has imposed barriers to states' timely access to Perkins V and AEFLA grants. Furthermore, the reports raise questions about whether the transfer has actually reduced alleged "duplication of effort,"²⁶ or just created inefficiency. Given these concerns, we request that GAO review the transition of the administration of ED's Perkins V and AEFLA programs to DOL. Additionally, as ED's later-announced IAAs from November 2025 are implemented, we also request that GAO investigate the extent to which those IAAs create inefficiencies or compromise grantees' timely access to funding; undermine the quality, scope, and timeliness of technical assistance and support provided to grantees; jeopardize services for students; impose administrative burdens on state or local educational agencies; weaken federal support to protect the rights of students, children, youth, and families under federal education laws; and affect other indicators of program integrity and quality.

In its work investigating the OCTAE and other IAAs, we ask that GAO consider the following questions and issues, as applicable:

1. How much did the OCTAE IAA cost ED and DOL to implement in fiscal years 2025 and 2026?
2. To what extent did states face challenges in accessing Perkins V and AEFLA grants? To what extent are local Perkins or AEFLA grantees facing challenges in accessing federal Perkins or AEFLA funds? What steps have ED and DOL taken to identify and address these challenges, and how much did any such steps cost?
3. To what extent did ED and DOL develop and implement comprehensive plans for transitioning Perkins V and AEFLA grant administration to DOL's payment system? To what extent did any delays or inefficiencies in such plans affect states' access to Perkins V grants?
4. To what extent has DOL's payment system failed to meet user needs for administering Perkins V and AEFLA grants since the OCTAE IAA was implemented? If significant failures occurred, what steps did ED and DOL take to correct such failures, and how much did those steps cost?
5. What issues were identified as part of testing DOL's payment system for use with Perkins V and AEFLA grant administration?
6. What system issues remain unresolved, and does DOL have plans to address them? How have any such issues affected states and grantees? Has DOL made progress on implementing such plans?
7. Please identify any deficiencies/gaps between DOL's payment system and the G-5 system that ED used to administer this program, and if possible, provide information

²⁶ U.S. Department of Education, "U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Labor Implement Workforce Development Partnership," press release, July 25, 2025, <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-and-us-department-of-labor-implement-workforce-development-partnership>.

about whether administering this program through DOL has been more costly, time-consuming, or resource-intensive.

8. Has the DOL transfer increased or decreased government efficiency? How has the cost of administering CTE and adult education programs changed since the OCTAE IAA was implemented?
9. Prior to the OCTAE IAA's implementation, to what extent was ED's CTE and adult education grant administration and technical assistance duplicative of DOL's responsibilities, as the Trump administration alleges?
10. To what extent did the quality and availability of technical assistance provided to states and local grantees change due to the OCTAE IAA? What gaps are grantees still reporting in the provision of technical assistance?
11. How has the OCTAE IAA changed reporting processes for grantees under the Consolidated Annual Reports (CARs)?
12. Please identify any major statutory or regulatory responsibilities delegated to ED that are not being met due to shifts in responsibilities under the IAA, including reviewing and approving changes to state plans; monitoring state and local compliance with statutory requirements, including accountability and improvement requirements; and meeting all reporting requirements under federal law.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Health, Education, Labor,
and Pensions

Patty Murray

Patty Murray
Vice Chair
Senate Committee on
Appropriations

Tammy Baldwin

Tammy Baldwin
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and
Related Agencies