

# ‘Significant cuts’ possible after Trump administration withholds \$29 million from R.I. education

The federal funding, which was expected on July 1, impacts thousands of students who are learning English, attend after-school programs, or are adult learners

By [Steph Machado](#) Globe Staff, Updated July 9, 2025, 2:33 p.m.



President Donald Trump speaks during a Cabinet meeting in the Cabinet Room of the White House in Washington, D.C., on July 8. DOUG MILLS/NYT

PROVIDENCE — Rhode Island stands to lose \$29 million in education funding currently being withheld by the Trump administration, the state’s education commissioner said, setting up the potential for layoffs, delayed services for thousands of students learning English, cuts to after-school programs and more.

“This is completely unjustified, unprecedented and most likely is illegal,” said Congressman Seth Magaziner, a Democrat. “This is funding that Congress passed on a bipartisan basis.”

He said at a news conference Wednesday he expects a legal battle to ensue over the withheld funding.

The [withheld funds](#) include more than \$5 million to Providence, the state’s largest school district, where 38 percent of students are [multilingual learners](#), the term for students who are learning English.

Rhode Island education commissioner Angélica Infante-Green said the decision “caught everybody by surprise.” She noted that [President Trump](#) previously signed an [executive order](#) declaring English be the country’s official language.

“I just don’t understand the rationale,” Infante-Green said in an interview with the Globe. “Not that I agree, but recently the federal government made English the official language of the United States, so I don’t understand how they want us to support their initiative without funding it.”

The US Department of Education [unexpectedly withheld](#) more than \$6 billion in funds to states slated to be disbursed on July 1, writing in a three-sentence email on June 30 that the grants were under “review,” to ensure “taxpayer resources are spent in accordance with the President’s priorities and the Department’s statutory responsibilities.”

Massachusetts had more than \$100 million withheld, and [New Hampshire had almost \\$27 million.](#)

“We don’t know what ‘under review’ means,” Infante-Green said. “This is really concerning for all of us. ... Our districts depend on these dollars.”

The withheld funds represent about 17 percent of Rhode Island’s federal money for K-12 education, according to Magaziner’s office.

The news sent superintendents and community organizations scrambling. Since the money was expected to be disbursed on July 1, it was already accounted for in school budgets for the upcoming year. No timeline has been announced for the completion of the review.

While federal education officials did not explain their reasoning in its notice to states, the Office of Management and Budget said in a statement to the Globe that the funds were withheld after finding some were “grossly misused to subsidize a radical leftwing agenda,” including “illegal immigrant advocacy.”

The statement gave examples in New York and Washington state. A spokesperson did not respond to a question about whether the Trump administration believed any funding in Rhode Island had been used inappropriately.

# R.I. education funds withheld by Trump administration

The funding was expected to be disbursed on July 1

Total withheld	\$29,371,806
Professional development	\$10,835,611
Academic enrichment	\$6,659,535
After-school and summer programs	\$6,515,398
English language acquisition	\$2,978,572
Adult education	\$2,382,690
Migrant education	\$0

Chart: STEPH MACHADO/GLOBE STAFF • Source: R.I. Department of Education

The withheld funds include money for out-of-school learning such as after-school and summer programs, services for students who are learning English, professional development for teachers, academic enrichment, and adult education. (Funds for migrant education were also withheld, but Rhode Island does not receive any money from that program.)

Other federal funding, such as money for students with disabilities, was not affected.

The after-school and summer learning grant being withheld is known as 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which serves thousands of students in high-poverty, low-performing districts during non-school hours.

Mayor Brett Smiley said he visited the Boys and Girls Club, one of the organizations that receives the funds, in Fox Point on Wednesday morning, where children were learning about digital literacy.

“Whether your kid is one of these programs or not, these are our future neighbors, our future leaders, our future workforce,” Smiley said.

The Providence After School Alliance, known as PASA, receives \$1 million from the federal program, roughly half of the organization's budget, interim executive director Eric Gurna said.

About 1,000 students a year engage in after-school and summer learning at PASA, where they can get healthy meals and participate in music, sports and other activities.

"In after-school, it's a chance for them to continue their learning, but it's also a chance for them to be active and healthy," Gurna said. "They're getting to engage in the hands-on learning activities that they don't get during the school day."

If the funding doesn't come through, "at the very least, there will have to be significant cuts," said Gurna, who just started at PASA last month. He said programming for this summer is funded, so the potential cuts would come at the start of the school year.

"There are programs that are fully funded by 21st Century that will certainly close," Gurna said.

While foundations and private donors such as corporations also give money, those grants are often for special programming, Gurna said, which wouldn't be possible without the staff who are paid with the federal funds.

"The public funding provides the infrastructure that the rest of it hangs on," Gurna said. "There's no way, even in the best of times, that the private sector is going to balance this out."

Infante-Green said if the money isn't released, there could be major budget cuts, including layoffs. She controls the Providence public schools under a state takeover of the district. Providence has more than 7,000 multilingual learners, and data shows that students who exit the program — meaning they have become proficient in English — [perform better than their peers](#).

Infante-Green said education commissioners from across the country, in both blue and red states, met last week to discuss the situation.

“This is a big deal,” said Infante-Green, who noted that the funds are used for payroll in school districts. “Even a two-month or three-month delay, that has an impact.”

If the money isn’t released, she said decisions about job cuts would have to be made over the next month.

“Every single district is going to be impacted,” Infante-Green said.

She said it’s been difficult to lead the school system under the current circumstances, and compared it to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The pandemic was hard, and this feels similar to that,” she said. “It just feels very shaky to us.”

Public education has faced a series of uncertainties since Trump took office, though courts have temporarily halted some of his plans, including [mass layoffs](#) at the US Department of Education. Massachusetts and Rhode Island are among the states that have [pushed back](#) against the president’s attempt to remove diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives from schools.

Another multi-state lawsuit over this new funding issue is likely.

“If I have to show up at the door of the Department of Education or OMB, wherever it is, I will do that,” Infante-Green said.

*This story has been updated with statements from Seth Magaziner and Angélica Infante-Green.*

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