

NANCY GUTIERREZ  
MINORITY WHIP  
1700 WEST WASHINGTON, SUITE H  
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007-2844  
CAPITOL PHONE: (602) 926-4134  
TOLL FREE: 1-800-352-8404  
ngutierrez@azleg.gov



COMMITTEES:  
EDUCATION  
APPROPRIATIONS

DISTRICT 18

Arizona House of Representatives  
1700 West Washington Street  
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

August 7, 2024

Representative Gress,

My colleagues and I would like to request that the next Joint Legislative Audit Committee agenda include a special audit of the Arizona Department of Education's school improvement and Title I funding allocations dating back to January 2023.

The Department explained several months ago that Title I allocations were lower this year due in large part to grant funding reductions at the federal level. Since a portion of Title I grants go toward school improvement, those funds decreased as well. The reductions were so significant – and the Department announced them so late in the fiscal year – that school districts and charter schools were forced to make last-minute cuts to summer programming and employee positions in order to remain within their budgets.

The Department insists it is against its policy to release the data and formulas used to determine the reduced Title I allocations, meaning the impacted schools cannot review how the funding cuts were calculated. School finance officers across the state have tried and failed to re-create the reductions generated by the Department, leading to confusion and doubt regarding the accuracy of those calculations. Adding fuel to the fire is a recent news article<sup>1</sup> that reveals the Department allowed around \$24 million in federal grant monies to expire in September 2023 and waited until this summer to notify schools of the shortfall.

These actions bring into question whether the Department exercises the attention, transparency and clear communication needed to appropriately oversee our state's educational funding. We hope you will allow JLAC to consider a special audit of the Title I and school improvement programs in order to clarify this year's funding reductions and determine which Department practices kept federal funding from reaching schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Gutierrez".

Nancy Gutierrez  
Democratic Whip, LD 18

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Oscar De Los Santos".

Oscar De Los Santos  
Democratic Assistant Leader, LD 11

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lupe Contreras".

Lupe Contreras  
Democratic Leader, LD 22

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melody Hernandez".

Melody Hernandez  
Democratic Whip, LD 8

*Jennifer Pawlik*

Jennifer Pawlik  
State Representative, LD 13

*Judy Schwiebert*

Judy Schwiebert  
State Representative, LD 2