



## **Federal Policy Update March 25, 2025**

Research shows that the summer months are some of the most high-impact yet high-need times for America's young people during their education and development. From reducing hunger and juvenile crime to promoting literacy, math, STEM, physical and mental health to preparing older teens for success in college and careers, structured, supervised and evidence-based summer programs provide solutions to numerous challenges facing communities, working families, and kids.

Investing in America's children is a nonpartisan issue with bipartisan support and we call on all legislators from both sides of the aisle to protect and strengthen— not weaken— the institutions that make summer learning, meals, health, enrichment and employment opportunities possible for all students.

The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) is the leading national organization dedicated to ensuring all families in the U.S. can access and benefit from high-quality summer learning, enrichment and employment opportunities each year. Recent studies from Gallup show that when school is closed, 20 million (68%) of middle and higher-income students can afford to pay for additional summer opportunities to learn, grow and prepare for the next school year while only 10 million (37%) of lower income students can access and benefit from similar experiences. NSLA supports, convenes, and trains a non-partisan national network of 25,000+ leaders representing schools, non-profits, government agencies, and corporations working to close this gap and meet the variety of needs and interests of children over the summer.

NSLA is deeply concerned by the Administration's proposals to eliminate the U.S. Department of Education, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and reduce funding support for Summer Meals programs within the US Department of Agriculture. These directives threaten the ability of all children and families but especially the most vulnerable, to eat, learn, play and grow over their summers.

The U.S. Department of Education plays a critical role in advancing learning, enrichment, and youth employment opportunities by investing in quality summer programs and offering critical support services and data to states, districts and program providers. Similarly, IMLS supports public libraries and museums which serve as vital community hubs and provide summer learning, literacy, STEM and career development programs for local youth. The U.S. Department of Agriculture helps millions of students access healthy summer meals who might not be able to do so otherwise. Without the efforts and resources of these federal agencies, working parents and low-income children will struggle and fall behind. Eliminating these agencies and their summer investment programs weakens our nation's workforce pipeline, exacerbates existing learning and opportunity gaps, and undermines the academic recovery efforts still underway following the pandemic.

At a time when research overwhelmingly highlights the benefits and critical role expanded learning and enrichment opportunities play as key drivers of student and family success, we believe we should be

investing more—not less—in America’s future, our children. NSLA looks forward to supporting our state, district and local community partners as they do more to carry on this important work. We stand with educators, families, community organizations, and students in urging Congress to reject these funding cuts and reaffirm our nation’s commitment to ensuring fun, engaging, constructive and productive summers for all – not just for some.

*Authored by Ally Talcott, Founding Partner, Allied for Progress, NSLA Policy Consultant*