

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 6, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins,
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

We write to express our significant concerns about the suspension of the USDA Hispanic-Serving (HSI) E. Kika De La Garza (EKDLG) Fellowship Program and to ask that you immediately reinstate it.

The EKDLG Fellowship Program was established in 1998 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the program has had consistent support from every presidential administration since its establishment. The program strengthens educational partnerships between faculty, staff, and administrators from HSIs and USDA.

The EKDLG Fellowship Program is non-partisan and supports increasing the professional development, workforce development, and exposure opportunities for faculty, staff, and students nationwide. USDA's partnership with HSIs and Hispanic Serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities (HSACUs) plays a vital role in establishing a collaborative relationship and creating a nationwide network of educators working with USDA to help grow the next generation of the American agricultural workforce. These fellowships are open to faculty, staff, and administrators of all backgrounds that are employed at HSIs or Hispanic-Serving School Districts and students of all backgrounds are eligible to participate.

HSIs are economic engines and shape our nation's agricultural workforce. In 2022, HSIs enrolled 5.2 million students, including 66% of all Hispanic undergraduate students and over 31% of all college students in non-profit postsecondary institutions in the country. Programs like the EKDLG Fellowship Program equip educators with the tools to help students reach their full potential and support the nation's agricultural workforce pipeline. For example, the list of 2024 EKDLG participants shows the program's nationwide impact:

1. **University of Houston**, Sugar Land, Texas
2. **New Mexico State University**, Las Cruces, New Mexico
3. **The University of Arizona**, Tucson, Arizona
4. **Arizona Western College**, Yuma, Arizona
5. **Coastal Bend College**, Beeville, Texas
6. **Adams State University**, Alamosa, Colorado
7. **California State University, Chico**, Chico, California
8. **Montclair State University**, Montclair, New Jersey
9. **Texas A&M University, Kingsville**, Texas
10. **Mesa Community College**, Mesa, Arizona

11. **Hartnell College**, Salinas, California
12. **Texas Tech University**, Lubbock, Texas
13. **City Colleges of Chicago, Harold Washington College**, Chicago, Illinois
14. **Texas A&M University**, College Station, Texas
15. **Maricopa Community Colleges**, Tempe, Arizona
16. **University of Connecticut**, Storrs, Connecticut
17. **Waubensee Community College**, Sugar Grove, Illinois
18. **Northern Arizona University**, Yuma, Arizona
19. **University of California, Santa Barbara**, California
20. **Cuesta College**, San Luis Obispo, California
21. **University of Texas, San Antonio**, Texas
22. **CUNY New York City College of Technology**, Brooklyn, New York
23. **CUNY Hunter College**, New York, New York
24. **Florida International University**, Miami, Florida
25. **California State University, Fresno**, California
26. **Arizona State University**, Mesa, Arizona
27. **Texas Tech University**, Lubbock, Texas
28. **The University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley**, Edinburg, Texas
29. **Mt. Adams School District #209**, White Swan, Washington
30. **The Urban Assembly New York Harbor School**, New York, New York
31. **John Bowne High School**, Flushing, New York

The Department's decision to suspend EKDLG Fellowship Program threatens the U.S. agricultural workforce pipeline and the opportunities this program provides educators and students nationwide.

We urge you to immediately reinstate the E. Kika De La Garza Fellowship Program, similar to Department's reinstatement of the 1890 National Scholars Program, and to collaborate with Congress to ensure its long-term stability.

Sincerely,



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Agriculture, Nutrition, and
Forestry



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



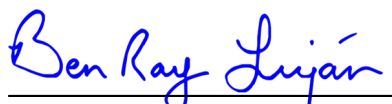
Ruben Gallego
United States Senator




Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



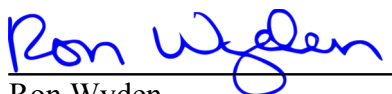
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator