

A Guide to Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) Congressional Outreach FY2026

Congress needs to hear from you so that they know how impactful your federally funded Full-Service Community School grant has been for your school, students, families, and community! Funding for the Full-Service Community School Grant Program is not guaranteed for Fiscal Year 2026.

A key strategy to increase the likelihood Congress continues to fund the FSCS Grant Program in the upcoming fiscal year is to reach out to your Congressperson and Senators to let them know what's at risk if they do not continue to fund the program. This strategy will be even more impactful if the outreach comes from current grant recipients.

To make the process of reaching out to your members of Congress as easy as possible, we've provided **two** templates, one for a phone call and one for an email message, to use when you contact them. We encourage you to personalize the message so that they know how these federal dollars have made a difference in the lives of your students.

We've also provided an FAQ (below) to help address any questions or concerns that you might have about the process, a guide to hosting a virtual meeting with a Member of Congress, and a messaging guide to help your phone call or email be well-received, no matter the recipient.

We truly appreciate your partnership in helping to advocate for the FSCS Grant Program!

Warmly,
The IEL Policy Team

FAQs:

Q: How do I find my Senator or Congressperson's phone number or email address?

- A: You can search by your address or zip code on [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov). This will give you the contact information for both your Senators and Representative.

Q: Is writing to my member of Congress considered lobbying?

- A: No, writing to your member of Congress is not lobbying, it's advocacy. To be considered lobbying, you have to ask a member of Congress to vote a specific way on a specific bill. In this case, you are advocating for continued funding beyond Fiscal Year 2025, since the current funding is not guaranteed for FY26. You are asking your member to ensure that a program you rely on remains supported, not urging a position on a specific bill.

Q: Which is better, emailing or calling?

- A: Both! You should reach out in any way you are most comfortable. Calling is great for when you only have a few minutes, and emailing is perfect if you have a lot you want to share with your Congressperson or Senator. Note: if you choose to call your Congressional Members, be sure to use their Washington office phone number rather than their district phone offices' phone numbers.

Q: Will I be speaking or corresponding directly with my Member of Congress?

- A: Most likely, no. If you call, chances are you will be leaving a voicemail. If anyone answers the phone or responds to your email, it will be a staffer or intern. However, if you do want to speak to your member of Congress, you can always request a meeting with them.

Q: Should I include a specific dollar amount in my phone call or email?

- A: You can say how much you've received or have yet to receive for your federal grant, but it's best to ask that "Congress fund the Full-Service Community School Grant Program at the highest level possible."

Phone Call Script Example:

**This is a sample script of what to say when calling a member of Congress. You can personalize or adapt this script as needed. You will most likely be leaving a voicemail, but in the event you speak with a person in the office, you can use the same template.*

Hello, my name is _____, from _____ (town/school district/school). I am calling about the Full-Service Community School Grant Program. We received a grant award in _____(year), and this program has made such a difference in our community.

Because of these federal funds, we have been able to _____ (list examples of how the grant-funded dollars have made a positive impact in your school or community). We need Congress to continue to fund the Full Service Community School grant program in FY26 to ensure we receive the grant dollars we were awarded to keep making these positive changes for our students, families, and community.

For example, without this funding _____ (cite an example of something that will no longer happen or a negative consequence of no longer being able to employ the Community School strategy [e.g. attendance rates, academic outcomes, etc.]).

Please continue to fund the Full-Service Community Schools Grant Program in FY26 so that my school can continue to receive the funds already promised to us.

Thank you.



Email Template Example:

**This is a template of what to write when emailing a member of Congress. You can personalize or adapt this template as needed.*

Subject Line: Please continue to fund the Full-Service Community Schools Grant Program in FY26

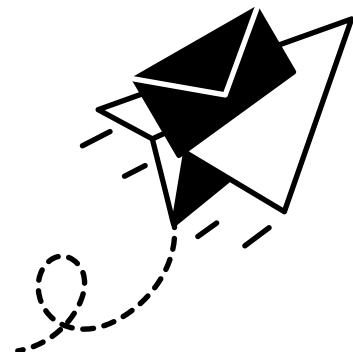
Hello, my name is _____, from _____ (town/district/school). I'm writing to you today to ask for your continued support in funding the Full-Service Community Schools Grant Program in FY26. We received a Full-Service Community Grant Program award in _____ (Year), and it has made a huge difference in the lives of students, families, and for our community. For example, because we have received these grant dollars, we have _____ (share your wins/areas of improvement/academic accomplishments).

Community Schools are a federally recognized evidence-based strategy where public schools actively engage parents and students in designing opportunities for better learning and a better life. Years of evidence point to the positive impacts Community Schools have had on academics, family engagement, community development, collaborative leadership, and return-on investment in communities across the country. Community Schools are an effective strategy to coordinate and align school and community resources to increase family and community engagement for students' success while also addressing urgent student, family, and community needs.

If we do not receive the remainder of our awarded funds, we risk losing _____ (cite an example of something that will no longer happen or a negative consequence of no longer being able to employ the Community School strategy [e.g. attendance rates, academic outcomes, graduation rates, etc.]).

Please continue to fund the Full-Service Community Schools Grant Program in FY26 so that my school can continue to receive the funds already promised to us.

Thank you,
(Your name)



A Guide to Virtual Hill Meetings:

One great way to build strong relationships with your Member of Congress (MOC) and their staffers is by organizing a Virtual Hill Meeting. This is efficient in cultivating an open line of communication, whether that be ensuring FY25 grant awards are received, advocating for Community Schools funding for FY26, and more. The guide below will provide a step-by-step on how to get in contact with the right staffer, how to organize a call, and best practice tips.

Who Do I Contact My Member?

- Find your Member of Congress using [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov)
- Find the DC staffer that works on Education
- **How to find Online:**
 - Resources like the House Telephone Directory (generally up to date), LinkedIn, or Legistorm (Paid)
 - Email Formats:
 - The House email format is first.last@mail.house.gov
 - The Senate email format is first_last@SenatorLastName.senate.gov
 - EXAMPLE: John_Doe@booker.senate.gov (if you were trying to email a staffer from Sen. Cory Booker's office)
- **How to Ask the Office:**
 - If you can't find the staffer's name, call your Member of Congress' Office. The people who pick up the phone are usually interns or junior staffers. When you call, you can use a template like below:

**Hello! My name is __, from ____.
I am looking to get in contact with
your education staffer to discuss our
Community Schools work in ____.
Could you please provide me with
their name and email address?**

Emailing a Congressional Staffer:

When emailing the staffer, you can use the template below:

Hello __,

My name is _____, from _____ (town/school district/school). I'd like to request a meeting with you to discuss the Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) Grant Program in FY26.

We received a Full-Service Community Grant Program award in _____ (Year), and it has made a huge difference in the lives of students, families, and for our community. With this support, we have been able to _____ (briefly state your major wins/areas of improvement/academic accomplishments).

During this meeting, we'd love to share the successes and stories from our schools - including ____ (i.e. hearing from our students, Coordinators, etc.). We are hoping to connect during ____ (preferred week or month), depending on your availability.

Community Schools are a federally recognized, evidence-based strategy where public schools actively engage parents and students in designing opportunities for better learning and a better life. Years of evidence point to the positive impacts Community Schools have had on academics, family engagement, community development, collaborative leadership, and return-on investment in communities across the country. Community Schools are an effective strategy to coordinate and align school and community resources to increase family and community engagement for students' success while also addressing urgent student, family, and community needs.

We would be honored to meet with you and share how this program continues to make a difference in our community. Thank you for your time and consideration—I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,
(Your name)

Structuring Your Virtual Hill Meeting:

When preparing for your Hill meeting, please be sure to inform your IEL Regional Director for coalition efforts. Members of Congress are looking for both **quantitative** and **qualitative** evidence of impact of Community Schools, especially stories.

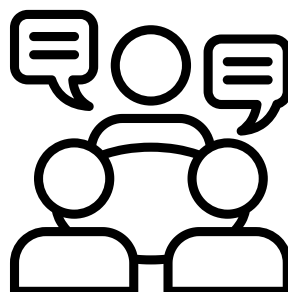
You should anticipate a 15-20 minute meeting, but send an invite for a 30-minute meeting.

- **Potential Strategies:**

- **Storytelling:** Inviting a student or Coordinator to discuss how CS has benefited them. (Staffers LOVE hearing from students! Just make sure they practice before they have the meeting)
- **Agenda-setting:** Write yourself a flexible internal agenda that has short bullets on points you know you want to make.
- **Partnership:** Be sure to note that if they have any additional questions about your program, would like your help to get in touch with other nearby CS, or to pass along more stories, that you would be happy to. Just noting this here, since this will help in keeping the door open for collaboration or further communication.

- **Follow up:**

- This is just a friendly reminder to follow up either the next day or during that week, thanking them for their time, and noting any information they asked for.



Virtual Hill Meeting FAQs:

Q: Why is it better to meet with a staffer than with the Member of Congress?

- A: The Staffer on Education is the office expert on Education. When the Member is deciding what they are requesting funding for, the staffers are relied on to inform them/inform the Appropriations staffer on what the needs of the constituency are.
- A: The Staffer has more time than the Member of Congress, which means they are more reliable to schedule a meeting with/the person you will be in contact with from the office.

Q: What should I mention when discussing funding levels?

- A: When discussing funding, ask for “highest funding possible.”

Q: What is the difference between Advocacy and Lobbying?

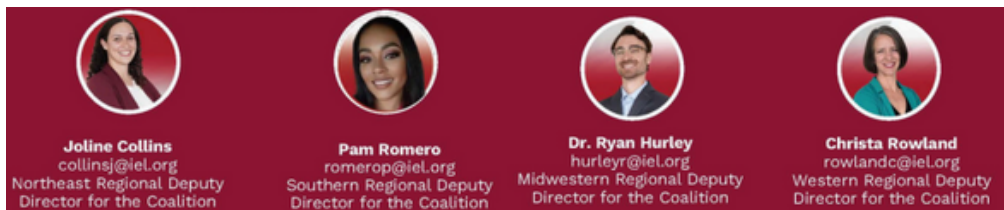
- A: If you are concerned about the difference between advocacy & lobbying, you can refer to this [website](#), and the IEL Everyone: An Advocate Webinar on [Understanding the Federal Budget](#).

Q: What should I say if I have not received my FY25 funding?

- A: If you are a FSCS Grantee (or a federal grantee), you should notify your Member of Congress/staffer if you have not received your FY25 grant award, and ask for level funding or highest funding possible for FY26, as you are obligated to those funds.

Q: Can I schedule in-person Hill Visits?

- A: If you are located in the Washington D.C./Baltimore Metro area (DMV), and would like to have an in-person meeting, please contact your Regional Director.



If you are looking for extra advice or would like to schedule a prep call, please email parkm@iel.org and include “CS Hill Meeting Prep Call” in the subject line.

