



## League of United Latin American Citizens

September 12, 2013

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The Honorable Arne Duncan  
Secretary  
Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20202-4537

Dear Secretary Duncan:

On behalf of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the nation's oldest and largest Hispanic civil rights organization, I write to express concern regarding findings highlighted in a recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report titled *Education Needs to Further Examine Data Collection on English Language Learners in Charter Schools*, by George A. Scott. The report, released in July 2013, notes, among other things, that the Department of Education's ability to determine English Language Learner (ELL) success in charter schools is severely impaired by a lack of reporting and shortage of data on charter schools. Many charter schools simply do not know how many ELL students are enrolled in their schools.

Closing the achievement gap between Latino students and their peers is one of LULAC's highest priorities and of particular concern, is our nation's ELL students. The GAO attempted to determine if the nation's 6,000+ charter schools educate ELL students in an equitable manner. Unfortunately, such a determination could not be made due to widespread problems in the quality of the data reported by a significant number of charter schools. LULAC supports the GAO's recommendation that the Department of Education address, in a comprehensive manner, the issue of insufficient and inadequate reporting by charter schools.

As the number of charter schools across the United States continues to increase, our organization believes that it is critically important to ensure that ELL students receive the same type of services that they would in traditional public school settings. The GAO found that 37 percent of charter schools had blank fields in their reporting documents that show ELL enrollment. Most troubling is the fact that in states generally known to have a large number of ELL students, namely New York and New Jersey, over 80 percent of charter schools had left blank fields in their reported records<sup>1</sup>.

According to the GAO's findings, data problems could interfere with Department of Education's ability to ensure that charter schools are complying with relevant federal ELL-related requirements. Such problems could keep schools from being held accountable for the achievement of underserved students, particularly ELL students.

Since 1929, the League of United Latin American Citizens has fought hard to ensure that Latino students have equitable access to quality education. Such ineffective data collecting techniques hurt not only ELL students but also all students who require other special attention in school.

Our organization is glad to discuss this issue further and looks forward to working with you to provide our schools with adequate tools to ensure that Latino students have equitable access to supports and resources needed to benefit from accurate data reporting. Please do not hesitate to contact Luis Torres, LULAC's Director of Education Policy, at 202-833-6130 or [latorres@lulac.org](mailto:latorres@lulac.org) should you have any questions or would like more information.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Margaret Moran  
LULAC National President

<sup>1</sup>George A. Scott, *Education Needs to Further Examine Data Collection on English Language Learners in Charter Schools*, July 2013