



NEWS RELEASE

Arizona House of Representatives
Representative Matt Gress (R-4)

1700 West Washington • Phoenix, Arizona • 85007

Wednesday, August 14, 2024
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State Representative Gress Welcomes Public Discussion on Arizona Education Funding in Upcoming Meeting

STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX – Arizona State Representative Matt Gress, House Chairman of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee (JLAC), has responded today to a request from Democrat Representative Nancy Gutierrez and her colleagues for a special audit of the Arizona Department of Education's (ADE) school improvement and Title I funding allocations.

In his response, Representative Gress emphasized the importance of oversight and transparency in state agencies and welcomed Superintendent Tom Horne's request to appear before the JLAC at its September meeting to address concerns and provide clarity regarding the funding issues raised.

“As you know, JLAC serves several functions. First and foremost, the committee serves as a legislative check on the executive, providing oversight of all state agencies, departments, boards, and commissions to ensure accountability and transparency. As Chairman of JLAC, I sincerely appreciate your interest to utilize the expertise of the Office of the Auditor General to investigate and better understand agencies like ADE.”

“In response to your letter, ADE Superintendent Tom Horne has directly requested to be placed on JLAC's upcoming meeting agenda to address the misinformation surrounding school improvement and Title I funding allocations. I have always valued how accessible Superintendent Horne and his office have made themselves to me and my colleagues over the years.”

“I believe it is essential to better understand the issues at hand by first allowing a public forum for questions and answers before proceeding with a special audit; therefore, I welcome Superintendent Horne's presence at JLAC's September meeting.”

The member's full letters are attached.

Matt Gress is a Republican member of the Arizona House of Representatives serving Legislative District 4 in Phoenix. Follow him on X/Twitter at @MatthewGress.

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DISTRICT 4



COMMITTEES:
COMMERCE
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT
COMMITTEE
Chairman 2024

Arizona House of Representatives Phoenix, Arizona 85007

August 14, 2024

Sent via Email

The Honorable Nancy Gutierrez
Democratic Whip
1700 W. Washington St.
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

The Honorable Melody Hernandez
Democratic Whip
1700 W. Washington St.
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

The Honorable Lupe Contreras
Democratic Leader
1700 W. Washington St.
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

The Honorable Jennifer Pawlik
1700 W. Washington St.
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

The Honorable Oscar De Los Santos
Democratic Assistant Leader
1700 W. Washington St.
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

The Honorable Judy Schwiebert
1700 W. Washington St.
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Dear Representatives Gutierrez, Contreras, De Los Santos, Hernandez, Pawlik, and Schwiebert:

I am writing to confirm that my office has received your letter dated August 7, 2024, in which you requested that the next Joint Legislative Audit Committee (JLAC) agenda include a special audit of the Arizona Department of Education's (ADE) school improvement and Title I funding allocations dating back to January 2023.

As you know, JLAC serves several functions. First and foremost, the committee serves as a legislative check on the executive, providing oversight of all state agencies, departments, boards, and commissions to ensure accountability and transparency. As Chairman of JLAC, I sincerely appreciate your interest to utilize the expertise of the Office of the Auditor General to investigate and better understand agencies like ADE.

In response to your letter, Superintendent Tom Horne has directly requested to be placed on JLAC's upcoming meeting agenda to address the misinformation surrounding school improvement and Title I funding allocations. I have always valued how accessible Superintendent Horne and his office have made themselves to me and my colleagues over the years.

Regarding August 7, 2024 JLAC Request Letter

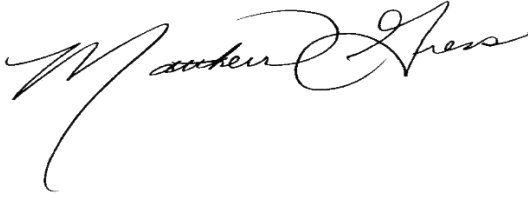
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I believe it is essential to better understand the issues at hand by first allowing a public forum for questions and answers before proceeding with a special audit; therefore, I welcome Superintendent Horne's presence at JLAC's September meeting.

Thank you again for your interest, and I look forward to learning more with you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Gress". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Matt Gress

State Representative - Legislative District 4

Arizona House of Representatives

Chairman 2024 | Joint Legislative Audit Committee

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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 article¹ 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, appearing to read "Nancy Gutierrez".

Nancy Gutierrez
Democratic Whip, LD 18

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Oscar De Los Santos".

Oscar De Los Santos
Democratic Assistant Leader, LD 11

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lupe Contreras".

Lupe Contreras
Democratic Leader, LD 22

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melody Hernandez".

Melody Hernandez
Democratic Whip, LD 8

Jennifer Pawlik

Jennifer Pawlik
State Representative, LD 13

Judy Schwiebert

Judy Schwiebert
State Representative, LD 2