



NEWS RELEASE

Arizona House of Representatives
Representative Michele Peña (R-23)

1700 West Washington • Phoenix, Arizona • 85007

Tuesday, November 25, 2025
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lawmakers Call on State Board of Education to Fix English Immersion Rules, Remove Ideological Coursework

STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX – Arizona State Representative Michele Peña today sent a letter—cosigned by several House and Senate colleagues—to the State Board of Education urging members to authorize the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) to begin rulemaking and correct the Structured English Immersion (SEI) Endorsement Course Framework at the Board’s next meeting on Monday, December 1.

Representative Peña and her colleagues warn that the current rules put Arizona at risk of federal noncompliance and allow universities to insert political and race-based content into teacher preparation courses, contrary to state law and the purpose of SEI.

Constituents have reported that SEI coursework is being used to advance ideological material instead of focusing on research-based English language instruction. President Trump’s executive order prohibits the use of federal funds for DEI programming, and the current SEI requirements are not compliant, placing federal funding in jeopardy.

The lawmakers also raise concerns about the Board’s hesitation at its October meeting to begin the rulemaking process, despite ADE being prepared to move forward.

“Parents expect English-language instruction to focus on English-language instruction,” Representative Peña said. **“Instead, they’re finding courses with ideological material that has nothing to do with helping students learn English. The Board can’t ignore federal requirements, and it shouldn’t look the other way while universities inject political content into SEI training. The framework needs to be corrected now, and delays only create further problems for students, teachers, and the state.”**

State law requires SEI to be a research-based model for English acquisition. Adding DEI-aligned content or ideology undermines that purpose by dividing classrooms, distracting educators, and shifting instructional time away from what the law requires.

The lawmakers urge the Board to authorize ADE to begin rulemaking and remove any provisions that violate federal directives or the requirement for instructional neutrality.

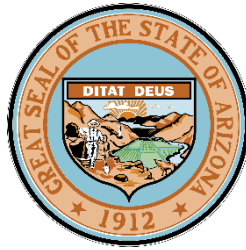
A copy of the letter is attached.

Michele Peña is a Republican member of the Arizona House of Representatives serving Legislative District 23 in Yuma, Pinal, and Maricopa Counties. Follow her on X at @michelepenaaz.

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November 25, 2025

Via U.S. Mail and Email

Arizona State Board of Education

Re: Support for ADE's Recommendation Striking Language to Comply with
Federal Standards

Dear Members of the State Board of Education,

We are writing in our official capacity as Arizona State Legislator's to express our support for the Arizona Department of Education's (ADE) proposed revisions to the Structured English Immersion (SEI) Framework and to make clear our serious and immediate concerns regarding the consequences of leaving the current language in place. The status quo is harming instructional quality and undermining classroom integrity statewide.

Our office has heard from numerous constituents who expected SEI coursework to reflect neutral, research-based English language instructional methodology. Instead, they are reporting university courses loaded with ideological, divisive, and race-based content, material that has no place in SEI and is being slipped in under the protection of the current, poorly constructed framework. Institutions are exploiting vague and permissive language to push political agendas into teacher preparation. This is a breach of public trust.

As mentioned at the State Board of Education Meeting on October 27, 2025, President Trump's Executive Order expressly prohibits the use of federal funds to support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programming. The state cannot ignore this directive without jeopardizing critical federal funding streams. The existing SEI Endorsement Course Framework is not compliant and maintaining it as-is exposes Arizona to unnecessary and entirely avoidable risk. It must be corrected.

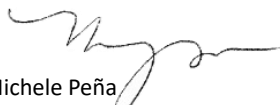
We also want to address the Board's recent interest in a study committee before initiating the public process to make necessary revisions to the current framework. ADE, in its statutory capacity to provide staffing support to the Board, came to you ready to move forward. The question posed at your previous meeting was not a vote on proposed changes but rather whether to start the process to restore instructional neutrality and legal compliance. The hesitation on the part of the Board is deeply concerning and gives the appearance of a delay tactic designed to slow or obstruct needed reforms.

But compliance is only one piece of the problem. Under A.R.S. § 15-756.01, SEI is intended to be a model focused only on research-based English language acquisition. That is all. The insertion of DEI-aligned language, political ideology, or racialized theories is not only outside the scope of the statute, but it also actively undermines the purpose of SEI by introducing content that divides classrooms, distracts educators, and shifts instructional time away from what the law actually requires. Arizona's students deserve better than to have their language instruction diluted by ideological philosophies and turned into a political debate.

For these reasons, we strongly urge the Board to immediately authorize ADE to open the rulemaking process and remove any provisions in the SEI Endorsement Course Framework that conflict with federal directives or violate the principle of instructional neutrality. Arizona's standards must be academically focused, legally compliant, and free from political manipulation.

We expect the Board not to delay corrective action or hide behind process barriers that were never required when these controversial provisions were inserted. Our students, teachers, and districts deserve a framework grounded in objective, research-based instruction, not ideological experimentation.

Sincerely,



Michele Peña
Arizona State Representative, LD 23



David Marshall
Arizona State Representative, LD 7



Michael Carbone
Majority Leader
Arizona State Representative, LD 25



James Taylor
Arizona State Representative, LD 29



Leo Biasiucci
Arizona House of Representative, LD 30



Hildy Angius
Arizona State Senator, LD 30



Lisa Fink
Arizona State Representative, LD 27



Tim Dunn
Arizona State Senator, LD 25

Cc: Governor Katie Hobbs
Superintendent Tom Horne