

THE GENDER EQUITY COALITION

April 25, 2025

Dear Member of Congress:

This is a critical moment for protecting our nation's students and their futures, safeguarding educational equity, and delivering on our nation's promise of equal opportunity for all. **The Gender Equity Coalition (GEC)** convenes over 120 leading national organizations, each driving progress on issues at the forefront of gender policy. Collectively, our organizations reach millions of members, organizers, advocates, and everyday people across the United States.

Our coalition is committed to protecting our communities, advancing gender justice, and championing policies that make this country stronger, fairer, and more inclusive for people of all genders. This includes, without exception, defending diversity, equity, and inclusion in public schools and ensuring that every student has access to a quality education and the opportunity to succeed. **We are writing in this moment to affirm that our coalition unequivocally stands with students, families, educators, caregivers, and workers across the country as public education comes under attack—threatening to destabilize communities, undermine civil rights, and weaken our workforce for years to come. We ask that you stand with us and fight to protect the integrity of the Department of Education and its vital work.**

The dismantling of the Department of Education under [Executive Order 14242](#) would have devastating consequences, particularly for women and girls, students of color, immigrant students, LGBTQIA+ students, students with disabilities, students of faith, and those in underfunded, underserved, and rural communities. As the primary federal agency historically responsible for ensuring educational equity, the Department enforces civil rights protections, administers funding for critical programs, and provides essential support to millions of students nationwide. Mass firings across key offices within the Department—including the Office of Civil Rights, English Language Acquisition, Federal Student Aid, and the National Center for Education Statistics—have already weakened its capacity to fulfill this mission.

Our stance is clear: *All* students have the right to access a quality education and the opportunity to learn in an environment that is safe, supportive, and free from discrimination. The consequences of dismantling, and eventually eliminating the Department of Education would be profound and far-reaching:

- **Threatening Title I Funding** – Cutting Title I funding under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) would strip essential resources from more than half of the nation's public schools, which serves approximately 26 million low-income students. Removing these resources would exacerbate racial and economic inequities and limit opportunities for millions.

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- **Undermining Civil Rights Protections** – Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 are foundational laws that protect students from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, and sex. Undermining the Department of Education’s ability to enforce these protections will place students of color, immigrant and international students, LGBTQIA+ youth, pregnant and parenting students, and student survivors of sexual violence at greater risk of discrimination and harm. In particular, these actions will weaponize what remains of the Department of Education’s enforcement duties to target schools that maintain diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, sensitive location policies, and schools that have trans inclusive sports and bathroom policies.
- **Diminishing Support for Students with Disabilities** – Special education funding and protections for disabled students will be at risk, including those provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Millions of students, comprising 15% of the total student population, who rely on IDEA for necessary accommodations—such as specialized instruction and assistive technology—could lose access to the education they are legally entitled to receive.
- **Weakening School Discipline and Civil Rights Oversight** – The loss of Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) and National Center for Education Statistics data would remove accountability for racial and disability disparities in school discipline, academic performance, and resource access. This would reinforce the school-to-prison pipeline, weaken efforts to prioritize mental health support over punitive measures, and allow harmful practices to continue unchecked, including for Black girls and girls of color who face much harsher school discipline than their white peers.
- **Endangering School Health and Nutrition Programs** – Guaranteed access to school health and nutrition programs, including meals, mental health support, and medical care, is proven to be essential for student success. While the USDA administers school meal programs, the Department of Education provides important guidance and support to help schools implement these resources. Without this support, these vital programs are at risk, potentially leaving many students without the support they need to learn and thrive.
- **Exacerbating Confusion for Student Loan Borrowers** – The Department of Education is critical for protecting student loan borrowers, especially women and women of color, who disproportionately carry student debt. Women hold nearly two-thirds of outstanding student loans, with Black women experiencing the highest debt burdens. The Department oversees programs that open the door to higher education, such as FAFSA and the federal student loan program, which have been lifelines for students who may not otherwise be able to afford college out of pocket. Transferring the student loan portfolio to the Small Business Administration, an agency lacking experience in managing such programs, would be detrimental to borrowers and could exacerbate existing inequities. Robust borrower protections and fair repayment programs help address systemic inequities, reduce racial and gender wealth gaps, and ensure education remains a pathway to economic empowerment. Federal student aid programs, including loans,

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grants, and work-study, would also be in jeopardy, making higher education even less accessible.

- **Limiting Additional Funding Resources** – The Department of Education helps supplement state funding with essential resources for schools in low-income communities, for students experiencing homelessness, and to support programs such as music and arts at the local level. Without this funding, many already under-resourced schools would lose critical funding that directly benefits students, our nation's teachers, and supports communities.

Attacks on our public education system are attacks on all our children, young adults, and their future. America's families depend on a federally supported, strong public education system to give the next generation the tools and resources to succeed. Education is not only a pathway to opportunity but also to a thriving workforce, economy, and nation.

We call on you to act with urgency and compassion to protect the future of all students. The stakes are too high, and the consequences too dire. Stand with us for the well-being of our students, for the strength of our families, and for a future that is just, equitable, and prosperous for all.

Sincerely,

The Gender Equity Coalition

The Undersigned Members of the Gender Equity Coalition:

9to5 National Association of Working Women
All Above All*
Alliance for Girls
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
Black Women's Health Imperative
Care in Action
Caring Across Generations
Center for Policing Equity
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
End Rape On Campus
Equal Rights Advocates
ERA Coalition
Family Values @ Work
Feminist Majority Foundation
Girls for Gender Equity
Higher Heights for America
If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice

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In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
Institute for Women's Policy Research
Just Solutions
Justice and Joy National Collaborative
Legal Momentum, the Women's Legal Defense & Education Fund
me too. International
MomsRising
Monsoon Asians & Pacific Islanders in Solidarity
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
National Council of Jewish Women
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
National Women's Law Center
National Women's Political Caucus
One Fair Wage
Paid Leave for All
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Reproductive Freedom for All
Sexual Violence Prevention Association (SVPA)
Shattering Glass
Supermajority
Survivors Know
Transgender Law Center
True North Research
UltraViolet Action
Women's March
YWCA USA