



November 24, 2025

Dear Member of Congress,

**Re: Urgent Oversight Needed — Unlawful Dismantling of the U.S. Department of Education**

The American Association of University Women (AAUW), representing 100,000 members and supporters nationwide, writes to express deep alarm over the Administration’s accelerating efforts to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education (ED). On November 18, 2025, ED announced six interagency “partnerships” that shift the day-to-day administration of major K–12 and higher education programs to the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Interior, and State, following sweeping staff cuts across the Department. This unprecedented transfer of responsibilities is unlawful, undermines congressional intent, and threatens equal educational opportunity for students across the country.

**Congress Created ED to Protect Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights**

Congress created ED through the Department of Education Organization Act of 1979 to strengthen the federal commitment to equal educational opportunity, improve coordination and accountability of federal education programs, and enforce civil rights protections in education. Only Congress can abolish a Cabinet department or reassign statutory responsibilities that Congress has placed within it. The Administration’s reliance on interagency agreements cannot override those statutory directives, particularly when ED is being hollowed out at the same time its work is dispersed.

**Civil Rights Enforcement Has Already Been Undermined**

AAUW has already had serious concerns about ED’s ability to ensure equal access to education after the Administration shuttered seven of the Office for Civil Rights’ 12 regional offices and laid off nearly half of the Office’s staff in the spring. In July, ED dismissed an unprecedented number of civil rights complaints, including thousands closed without full investigation. These actions have left millions of students without meaningful, accessible federal civil rights enforcement at a time when discrimination and harassment remain urgent realities in schools and on campuses. Fragmenting ED’s programmatic expertise across multiple agencies will only deepen this harm by severing the critical link between federal funding, education policy, and civil rights enforcement.

**Outsourcing ED’s Work Is Already Causing Disruption**

Recent experience also shows that outsourcing ED’s responsibilities does not “streamline” government or improve outcomes. Earlier this year, ED transferred the administration of Perkins career and technical and adult education funds to the Department of Labor under a similar



interagency agreement. States and grantees reported significant delays, technical breakdowns, and confusion navigating new grant and payment systems, prompting bipartisan concern from Congress that ED lacks the authority to shift these responsibilities and that programs are worse off under the transfer. If a \$1.4 billion program has already faced disruption, transferring vastly larger K–12 and higher education portfolios will predictably create chaos for states, districts, institutions, and students who rely on timely, accountable federal support.

### **Equity Implications for Women, Students of Color, and Students with Disabilities**

AAUW is especially concerned about what these moves mean for gender, racial, and disability equity. ED is the federal agency charged with ensuring that students can learn free from discrimination under Title IX, Title VI, IDEA, Section 504, and other civil rights laws.

Weakening ED’s capacity to enforce these protections will disproportionately harm women and girls, students of color, students with disabilities, LGBTQ+ students, Native students, immigrants, and student parents — students who already face the steepest barriers to opportunity and the greatest risk of being pushed out when supports fail.

At the same time, the Administration repeatedly frames education primarily as a “talent pipeline” for the workforce. AAUW rejects this narrow vision. Education is a civil right and a public good. It is how students build economic security, but also how they learn to think critically, contribute to democracy, lead in their communities, and pursue discovery and innovation that benefits us all.

### **AAUW Requests Immediate Congressional Action**

For these reasons, AAUW calls on Congress to:

1. **Exercise strong congressional oversight and investigate this unlawful transfer of authority.**

Hold hearings, demand documentation on the scope and legal basis of these agreements, and require ED to explain how it will meet its statutory obligations after dismantling its workforce and dispersing core functions.

2. **Publicly oppose the Administration’s attempt to dismantle the Department of Education.**

Congress must clearly state that ED’s civil rights and equal opportunity mission cannot be carried out through a fragmented patchwork of agencies.

3. **Support legislation or other actions that block any unauthorized reorganization of federal education programs.**

Reaffirm that statutory responsibilities assigned to ED may not be transferred, reduced, or effectively nullified through administrative agreements, staffing cuts, or budget



maneuvers.

AAUW stands ready to work with you to defend students' civil rights, protect equal educational opportunity, and ensure that federal education programs are administered lawfully and effectively.

Cosponsorship or votes associated with legislation regarding the U.S. Department of Education may be scored in the AAUW Action Fund *Congressional Voting Record* for the 119th Congress. Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gloria Blackwell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gloria L. Blackwell  
Chief Executive Officer