

February 26, 2026

Members of Congress,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express serious concern regarding the Department of Education's recent announcement that it is creating new interagency agreements (IAAs) to shift administration of key education programs to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

According to the Department of Education, HHS will take on a growing role in administering programs including School Emergency Response to Violence (Project SERV), School Safety National Activities, Ready to Learn Programming, Full-Service Community Schools, Promise Neighborhoods, and Statewide Family Engagement Centers. These are not peripheral efforts. They are core education programs designed to support student learning through family engagement, safe school environments, and community-based supports.

Bipartisan majorities in Congress recently spoke clearly on this matter. The most recent appropriations law, signed by the President earlier this month, explicitly protects the Department of Education from further dismantling. The law prohibits the transfer of funding or fundamental responsibilities to other agencies absent specific transfer authority in appropriations law. The report language accompanying the law that demonstrates the will of Congress states plainly that "no authorities exist for the Department of Education to transfer its fundamental responsibilities... including through procuring services from other Federal agencies."

The agreement further expressed concern that the Department of Education's "unprecedented use of Interagency Agreements" to transfer programmatic responsibilities to other agencies would fragment oversight, create inefficiencies, increase taxpayer costs, delay funds reaching states and school districts, and weaken federal support for students' rights under education law.

We share those concerns.

These programs were authorized by Congress to be carried out by the Department of Education because they are education programs. They require deep relationships with states, districts, educators, and families. They require subject-matter expertise in federal education law, civil rights protections, family engagement, and school accountability. Moving programming intended to facilitate student learning and community school support into HHS disrupts implementation, slows and complicates grant competitions, creates bureaucratic red tape and administrative confusion for applicants and grantees, and undermines congressional intent.

We support strong interagency coordination when it strengthens outcomes for students and families. However, coordination is not the same as transferring operational control of congressionally-authorized education programs. Congress explicitly allocated funding for these programs to remain within the Department of Education and has repeatedly declined to give the administration transfer authority. Proceeding with expanded IAAs in this context is inconsistent with both the letter of law and its spirit.

At a time when schools are managing academic recovery needs, youth mental health challenges, and community safety challenges, the last thing states and districts need is additional federal fragmentation that slows help and muddles accountability.

Therefore, as Congress writes Fiscal Year 2027 Labor-HHS-Ed funding bills, we request the inclusion of language that would bar the creation of any IAAs that transfer any significant responsibilities related to any Department of Education program, project, or activity to other agencies; reverse the transfers now being implemented; and return the Department of Education to its full operation.

Students, families, and educators deserve stability, transparency, accountability, and a federal partner fully accountable for delivering education programs as Congress intended.

SIGNED BY:

All4Ed

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

American Atheists

American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC)

California Partnership for the Future of Learning

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Coalition on Human Needs

Council for Exceptional Children

Diverse Charter Schools Coalition

EDGE Partners

EdTrust

Education Law Center

Education Law Center - PA

Educators for Excellence

Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)

Families in Schools

Healthy Schools Campaign

Kids First Chicago

League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)

National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement (NAFSCE)

National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC)

National Center for Learning Disabilities

National Education Association (NEA)

National Parents Union

Parents for Public Schools

Partnership for the Future of Learning

Public Advocates Inc

Public School Forum of North Carolina

Students Engaged in Advancing Texas (SEAT)

The Advocacy Institute

The Center for Learner Equity

The National Down Syndrome Congress

UnidosUS

Youth Advocacy & Policy Lab (Y-Lab)