



July 7, 2026

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), we urge you to oppose the current version of the Labor-HHS bill, which undermines access to quality education, comprehensive reproductive rights, and strong worker protections. Additionally, we ask that you include strong appropriations guardrails to oppose efforts to transfer core responsibilities of the U.S. Department of Education, such as the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) to the Department of Justice (DOJ).

AAUW supports policies that provide equitable, high-quality K-12 and higher education. For all students, especially students with disabilities, to have access to free, appropriate education without discrimination, it is imperative for civil rights and disability education programs to operate within the Education Department. Moving OSERS and OCR would fragment oversight, risk disrupting services, lead to the loss of staff with education expertise, and create confusion for families, states, and districts.

The Department of Health and Human Services is not an education agency. Students with disabilities need an office with education expertise to ensure they receive the services, supports, and accommodations they are guaranteed under federal law to learn, thrive, and succeed in life. Shifting OSERS to an agency that lacks educational expertise and is not structured to provide robust oversight and guidance to states on special education would weaken the promise of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and jeopardize the educational rights of students with disabilities.

The Department of Justice is not structured to handle individual complaints from students and families. It cannot replace OCR's work in helping students and families file complaints, get answers, and resolve discrimination in schools. DOJ is an enforcement agency that is structured to address civil rights complaints through litigation. It lacks the resources and structure to conduct initial investigations into the thousands of complaints filed annually that OCR resolves without a lawsuit. Moving OCR would further weaken civil rights protections for students, especially for students with disabilities who are more likely to experience discrimination in schools, through delays, loss of institutional knowledge and practices, and the creation of a complex system that families and state and local educational agencies have to navigate.

AAUW urges strong oversight over the Department of Education. We are deeply concerned that this shift in responsibilities will reduce the quality of education for all students, diminish public accountability, fragment oversight of educational programs, and weaken enforcement of protections that students and families have against unfair treatment. In the past year, we have already witnessed the hollowing out of OCR's capacity through mass layoffs, the closing of regional offices, and a reduction in OCR's ability to investigate and resolve complaints. There have been reports that some legally required duties may no longer have sufficient staffing, and that many student civil rights cases are being dismissed or left unresolved.



Now is not the time to further destabilize our education system by shifting these responsibilities elsewhere. Instead, it is highly necessary to ensure that the Department of Education has the resources and capacity to fulfill its statutory obligations and to hold it accountable for protecting students' rights and providing access to quality education.

For these reasons, we urge you to demand answers, conduct oversight, and include language in the Fiscal Year 2027 appropriations bill that prohibits the Department of Education from using any appropriated funds to transfer, outsource, or otherwise shift special education programs or OCR enforcement responsibilities to other federal agencies without explicit congressional authorization.

Cosponsorship and votes associated with this legislation may be scored in the AAUW Action Fund *Congressional Voting Record* for the 119th Congress. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202-728-3300 or kissellm@aauw.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Meghan Kissell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Meghan Kissell
Senior Director, Policy & Member Advocacy