



March 20, 2025

Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities' Task Force Co-Chairs Denounce Efforts to Dismantle the U.S. Department of Education

The U.S. Department of Education (“the Department”) is a critical federal agency for students with disabilities. The Department oversees the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – which serves more than 8 million children, youth and young adults – and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) – which supports nearly 1.5 million students across the U.S. Children with disabilities have the right to a free, appropriate public education because of the federal government. The Department is in danger of being weakened and dismantled by the Administration through proposed Executive Orders and actions by the “DOGE” team. The Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities (CCD) Education Task Force opposes any actions to dismantle, eliminate, or reduce funding for key education laws overseen by the Department as these actions would have lasting negative impacts on students, families, educators, and the future of our entire education system.

In 1971, parents took their fight to federal court and won, securing protections for students with disabilities that Congress later expanded nationwide in 1975. Prior to this law, many states under-educated children with disabilities if they educated them at all. Since 1979, the Department has played a critical role in ensuring the rights provided by IDEA, including a “free and appropriate public education” (FAPE), are upheld.

The Department provides billions of dollars to states and local school districts to educate students with disabilities and to help train school leaders, teachers, and related service providers in the use of evidence-based practices that impact whether students achieve meaningful outcomes. These funds also support technical assistance and parent information centers, empowering parents with critical knowledge of their rights under IDEA. Meanwhile, the Department’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) safeguards the civil rights of students with disabilities by investigating patterns of discrimination, including the rampant abuse of restraint and seclusion in schools nationwide. Parents deserve to know that their voices are heard, and their children's rights are protected.

The “Reduction in Force” on March 14 resulted in the cutting of over 1,300 staff members of the Department. This includes many in the Office for Civil Rights which safeguards the civil rights of students with disabilities by investigating patterns of discrimination, including the rampant abuse of restraint and seclusion in schools nationwide. The Executive Order issued on March 20, 2025 directs the Secretary of Education to “take all necessary steps to facilitate the closure the Department of Education and return education authority to the States.” States and local communities already maintain the majority of control over education decisions—including curriculum and graduation requirements, teacher licensure standards, and the development of

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 plans. Removing federal oversight of critical civil rights laws, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, leaves students vulnerable to the variation in state implementation and threatens to bring us back to a time when many students with disabilities were denied an education.

CCD is also concerned about the prospect of programs that support students with disabilities being moved to other agencies. For example, legislation in the 119th Congress proposes to move IDEA to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) which would promote a medical model of disability that could only lead to stigmatizing, segregating, and “othering” children with disabilities. It is only the Department that holds the specific expertise to support key programs for students with disabilities. An agency such as HHS is not equipped to work directly with state education agencies who are delegated the responsibility to oversee local implementation of IDEA in school districts; nor is HHS able to provide essential technical assistance to parents as is currently conducted through a state and regional PTI network designed specifically to support children and families. Finally, the Department’s role to also oversee the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and other key education statutes (e.g., the Higher Education Act, Carl D. Perkins-career and technical education, and the provisions of law for vocational rehabilitation) are vital to reinforcing through K-16 research, practice, and technical assistance that students with disabilities are general education students. Students with disabilities must continue to receive support from an agency whose roles and functions are designed to ensure that every student is expected to achieve academically and access career training and post-secondary education. A medical model will not help students accomplish this.

An Executive Order cannot override the Congressional authority and abolish the Department of Education. Supporting students with disabilities is not a partisan issue.

The undersigned organizations will continue to fight for the hard won civil rights of children with disabilities. Together with allies in Congress and across the U.S., we will work to protect access to IDEA and other laws that support educational access and opportunity in America’s schools. CCD urges every policymaker to stand firm in the commitment to these children and their families.

Sincerely,

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