



# National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

September 19, 2017

RE: Docket ID ED-2017-OS-0074

Dear Secretary DeVos,

As one of the leading national organizations dedicated to preventing, addressing, and ending domestic violence, we firmly believe that all children and young people should feel safe and welcomed in their classrooms and on their campuses. Yet sexual violence and dating violence are prevalent at colleges and universities and impact a significant number of students at the higher education level, as well as in grades K-12. In addition, both remain highly underreported crimes, and far too many schools remain reticent to address this issue and its impact. When school environments are hostile because of sexual harassment, assault, abuse, or violence, students cannot learn and miss out on educational opportunities that enable them to become productive, contributing members of our communities.

When a school, campus, or school district fails to respond to this kind of discrimination, civil rights laws requires the Department of Education to step in. Indeed, federal regulations and guidance has been developed and issued over the past several years in order to help schools understand what the law requires of them and to educate students about the rights and protections that they have under the law. In particular, recent Title IX regulations, “Dear Colleague” letters, and related guidance has made significant strides towards ensuring that schools are adequately addressing sexual violence and dating violence and that survivors’ rights are protected. **We support Title IX and related civil rights laws and guidance, and would strongly oppose any effort by the Department of Education to rescind, modify, or replace these important mechanisms for upholding students’ civil rights.**

We urge you and your Department to continue to advance the provision of equity and fairness expressed in the 2011 Dear Colleague letter from the Department’s Office for Civil Rights and the 2014 “Questions and Answers on Title IX and Sexual Violence” guidance document, as well as to continue robust oversight and enforcement of schools’ compliance with Title IX. Furthermore, we urge the Department to reinstate prior guidance regarding the rights of transgender students and to continue to strongly enforce protections that support language access for students and efforts to address discrimination on the basis of race or religion.

Survivors of campus sexual violence and dating violence – as well as students who are Black, Latino, Asian American, Native American, immigrants, English learners, LGBTQ, or students with disabilities – face far too many barriers to educational success. The Department of Education must be a leader in helping all children and young people get the education that they need and deserve, and must ensure that our government strengthens all the tools it has to clarify and enforce our civil rights and education laws.

Sincerely,

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