

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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April 4, 2025

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary McMahon,

We write regarding the recent executive order President Donald Trump signed that directed you to take all necessary steps to close the Department of Education. The critical services that the Department provides include funding for schools in lower income areas, funding for schools to serve students with disabilities, managing \$1.6 trillion in federal student loan debt, and collecting important and sensitive data for students and colleges.¹ We request information on how the Department is able to meet its congressionally mandated obligations despite President Trump's order to dismantle the agency.

On March 20, 2025, President Trump signed an executive order directing you to begin closing the Department of Education. The order instructs that the Department's main functions be sent to the States and that you, "to the maximum extent appropriate and permitted by law, take all necessary steps to facilitate the closure of the Department of Education."²

It is not clear how the Administration anticipates implementing this order without massive disruption to students, families, and educators across the country. Before this executive order was issued, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt stated that "any critical functions of the Department" would remain under the Department's purview. In particular, Ms. Leavitt specified that federal student loans and Pell Grants "will still be run out of the Department of Education."³ This plan appears to have changed. Shortly after signing the executive order dismantling the Department, President Trump said that certain Department programming, including Pell grants, Title I funding, and resources and funding for children with

¹ *A Guide to What The U.S. Education Department Does (And Doesn't) Do*, NPR (Feb. 4, 2025) (online at www.npr.org/2025/02/04/nx-s1-5286311/trump-schools-education-department-funding-cuts-congress-student-loans).

² The White House, *Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities* (Mar. 20, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/improving-education-outcomes-by-empowering-parents-states-and-communities/).

³ *White House: 'Critical Functions' Will Stay Under Department of Education*, The Hill (Mar. 20, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/homenews/education/5205601-white-house-department-of-education/>).

disabilities, would be “redistributed to various other agencies and departments.”⁴ President Trump has not made clear when or how these transitions will supposedly occur, or how the Trump Administration will ensure that Department programs continue to serve students, educators, and families across the country throughout such a transition. We are concerned that critical programs operated by the Department, including federal student loans and protections for students with disabilities, will be seriously disrupted.

Notably, many of the agencies to which the Trump Administration wants to assign responsibilities that currently fall under the Department have announced historic cuts to their workforce in recent weeks. If these cuts are implemented, it is doubtful that these agencies will have the capacity to take on major responsibilities currently housed within the Department of Education.

For example, the Small Business Administration (SBA), which will reportedly absorb the federal student loan portfolio, has announced cuts to its workforce of more than 40%.⁵ The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which Trump said will be taking on “special needs” and nutrition programs, began firing thousands of workers this week and plans to cut 20,000 positions across the agency.⁶ The lack of qualified staff available to absorb critical Department of Education programs that support the upward mobility and education needs of the American people is alarming. Essential student programs cannot be transferred to agencies that have no experience supporting students and ensuring access to quality education.

By ordering you to close the Department without congressional approval, President Trump has overstepped the authority of his office. Because Congress created the Department, Congress has to approve any decision to close it.⁷

Given the risks that this executive order poses to students, educators, and schools across the country who rely on the critical services the Department oversees, we request that you provide the following information by May 2, 2025:

⁴ *What to Know About How Trump's Executive Order Will Affect American Education*, NBC News (Mar. 20, 2025) (online www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-administration/education-department-trump-what-is-next-student-loans-fafsa-rcna197302).

⁵ *Trump Says Small Business Administration Will Take Over Department of Education's Student Loan Portfolio*, CNN (Mar. 21, 2025) (online at www.cnn.com/2025/03/21/politics/student-loans-trump-sba/index.html); Small Business Administration, *Small Business Administration Announces Agency-Wide Reorganization* (Mar. 21, 2025) (online at www.sba.gov/article/2025/03/21/small-business-administration-announces-agency-wide-reorganization).

⁶ *President Trump and Defense Secretary Hegseth Deliver Remarks on F-47 Fighter Jet*, C-SPAN (Mar. 21, 2025) (online at www.c-span.org/program/white-house-event/president-trump-and-defense-secretary-hegseth-deliver-remarks-on-f-47-fighter-jet/657517); *RFK Jr. Announces Big Cuts to Department of Health and Human Services*, Washington Post (Mar. 27, 2025) (online at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2025/03/27/hhs-cuts-layoffs-rfk-cdc-fda/>); *Mass Layoffs Are Underway at the Nation's Public Health Agencies*, AP (Apr. 1, 2025) (online at https://apnews.com/article/health-human-services-layoffs-restructuring-rfk-jr-ec4d7731695e4204970c7eab953b2289?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=4/1/25%20%20Midday:&utm_term=Active%20subscribers%20from%20Memberful%20%28punchbowlnews%29).

⁷ *Education Department Fires 1,300 Workers, Gutting Its Staff*, The New York Times (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/11/us/politics/trump-education-department-firings.html>).

1. The statutory authority you and President Trump are relying on to close or drastically reorganize the Department;
 - a. All documents and communications related to the decision to close or reorganize the Department, including but not limited to communications between any individual at the Department of Education and any individual in the Executive Office of the President;
2. All steps you are taking to ensure that services are not interrupted for students and families as you attempt to dismantle the Department;
3. A list of every responsibility currently housed within the Department that will be transferred to another federal agency, and a description of which office within the new federal agency will assume that responsibility;
 - a. A detailed description of how the Department made the decision to transfer each responsibility it anticipates moving to another federal agency;
 - b. The name, title, and job description of any individual involved in the decision to transfer any of the Department's responsibilities to another federal agency;
 - c. All documents and communications related to this decision-making process; and
4. A detailed description of how each federal agency that will be absorbing responsibilities currently housed within the Department will ensure it is able to meet the needs of students, educators, and schools despite anticipated reductions in force.

The Department of Education performs essential functions that support the work of students, educators, and schools across the country. Any actions by the Trump Administration to interrupt or dismantle these critical responsibilities should be abandoned.

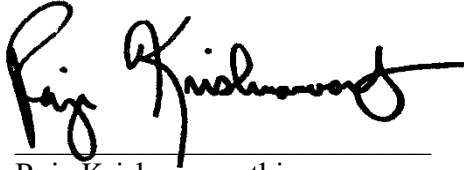
The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X.

The Honorable Linda McMahon

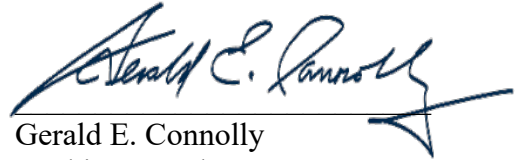
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If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health Care and
Financial Services



Gerald E. Connolly
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Glenn Grothman, Chairman
Subcommittee on Health Care and Financial Services

The Honorable James Comer, Chairman