



January 31, 2017

Oppose Confirmation of Betsy DeVos for Secretary of Education

Dear Senator,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the XX organizations listed below, **we urge you to oppose the confirmation of Betsy DeVos to be the next U.S. Secretary of Education.** All parents and students in this country – a majority of whom are of color or are low-incomeⁱ – want the best education, support and dignity for their own children. We stand with them and cannot support a nominee who has demonstrated that she seeks to undermine bedrock American principles of equal opportunity, nondiscrimination and public education itself.

The Secretary of Education's role as an enforcer of education and civil rights lawsⁱⁱ is central to advancing our shared vision of an inclusive and diverse system of high-quality public education that enables every student to live up to their potential. DeVos has demonstrated no previous commitment to ensuring equal educational opportunity in schools. Moreover, in her hearing before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee on January 17, 2017, she failed to demonstrate that she is capable of and committed to enforcing the law – as is required of the agency's chief executive.

Betsy DeVos' deference to state flexibility, even with regard to compliance with federal civil rights laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); her claim that demonstrating support for Title IX enforcement guidance would be "premature;" and her lack of support for accountability for all schools receiving federal funds only serve to reinforce our conclusion that her inadequate previous experience and missing record of support for students' civil rights make her unfit to serve as Secretary of Education.

When compared with Secretaries of Education throughout the history of the department, DeVos' lack of experience stands out. She has never been an educator or worked directly with children and families in public schools. She has never led a school, district or state agency tasked with educating students. She has never been a public school parent or a public school student. This lack of experience makes her uniquely unfamiliar with the challenges and opportunities facing the nation's students, families, educators and schools.

The U.S. Department of Education is responsible for implementing and enforcing laws protecting students from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex and disability and those laws that provide for educational opportunity from early childhood through graduate school. The person responsible for leading that department must absolutely be committed to enforcing federal laws on behalf of every single student in this country – without regard to LGBTQI status, family income, race, ethnicity, home language, gender, religion, disability or immigration status. Our nation's Constitution, economy, future and children deserve no less.

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Sincerely,

ORGANIZATIONS

ⁱ See: <http://www.southerneducation.org/Our-Strategies/Research-and-Publications/New-Majority-Diverse-Majority-Report-Series/A-New-Majority-2015-Update-Low-Income-Students-Now>

ⁱⁱ Department of Education Organization Act (Public Law 96-88)