

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 30, 2025

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

Dear Secretary McMahon:

We write to express our outrage at the Department of Education's (the Department) unprecedented cancellation of grants supporting students with disabilities. This decision demonstrates, once again, the Department's willingness to prioritize political ideology at the expense of the nation's students who need and deserve support to access quality education.¹

By revoking \$18.4 million in funding administered by the Department's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services,² you are harming the services and supports that students with disabilities, their families, schools, teachers, and related service professionals rely on from several longstanding, funded programs. Affected organizations include state institutions, non-profits, and universities working to provide resources for some of our highest-need student populations. You have taken funding away from technical assistance centers serving approximately 1,000 students with deaf-blindness across eight states,³ stopped both state and other personnel development programs designed to alleviate the widespread shortage of special educators and related service professionals,⁴ terminated sign language interpreter and braille training programs, and ended support for Community Parent Resource Centers that help families of students with disabilities understand their rights under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA).

Many of these grantees are receiving this cut in the middle of grant cycles that support programming for both the current and proximate years. This unprompted re-allocation of funding places students, families, teachers, and schools at risk of losing access to critical services, programs, and technical assistance to meet the individualized needs of students with disabilities.

Your justification for not continuing these grants is that grantees' application materials included references to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The administration's deliberate mischaracterization

¹ <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-trump-administrations-war-on-disability/>

² <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/most-but-not-all-imperiled-federal-grants-for-special-education-will-continue/2025/09>

³ <https://www.propublica.org/article/trump-dei-students-education-deaf-blind-grant-funding>

⁴ <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/trump-canceled-millions-for-special-education-teacher-training-whats-next/2025/09>

of DEI as a divisive tool, rather than an inclusive framework, harms students with disabilities and fails to understand the diversity of the communities these grantees sought to serve. Instead of allowing grantees the opportunity to adjust their scope of work to align with this administration's priorities, you are penalizing grantees for including language based on requirements from the previous administration to further a culture war.

These non-continuations come on the heels of other harmful attacks on special education programs intended to support students with disabilities. In February 2025, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) National Center for Special Education Research cancelled a contract for a transitions study for students with disabilities. The study had already invested \$20 million aimed at improving our understanding of effective transition support for high school students with disabilities as they moved toward post-high school life. Its abrupt cancellation after educators, students, and parents had already begun participating disrupted the support students were receiving and ended a major research initiative designed to help young people with disabilities.⁵ Furthermore, IES paused a special education expenditure study that Congress had requested. This reckless delay has impacted the data collection efforts mid-project cycle and could jeopardize the results from the study, which had promised to provide detailed information on how schools and districts use IDEA funding to provide special education services to students with disabilities. Lastly, the President's Fiscal Year 2026 budget request proposed combining multiple funding streams under IDEA into one and eliminating several programs, contravening the statute and conflicting with decades of bipartisan commitment to funding IDEA programs serving students with disabilities.

We strongly urge the Department to reconsider the decision to issue non-continuation notices to the 34 impacted grantees. These organizations put America's students with disabilities first, supporting specialized programs to ensure a student's right to a free appropriate public education is guaranteed. To better understand the Department's plans, we request responses to the following questions by October 14, 2025.

1. Please describe the policy and procedure utilized for the review of grants not continued on September 5, 2025.
 - a. Please identify the offices and personnel titles of staff involved in the review.
 - b. Please provide the total costs, including all personnel and non-personnel costs, of the review.
 - c. What review was done to determine the impact of each grant cancellation? Please provide the analysis for the impact of each grant cancellation, including the number of students, families, or related service professionals impacted by the loss of services.
 - d. Please provide the definition or describe the standard for any term or activity identified in a grantee application as the basis for not continuing a grant.

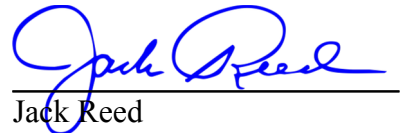
⁵ <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2025/02/26/trump-doge-cuts-to-education-research-hit-classrooms-and-students/>

- e. Please explain how each of the required elements under section 75.253 of the Education Department General Administrative Regulations were considered in making a decision to continue or cancel a multiyear project after the first budget period and identify any other specific elements contributing to the non-continuation of any grantee.
2. Please explain the policy and procedure for offering grantees the opportunity to clarify, explain or modify any element of their approved application prior to the non-continuation issuance.
3. When will reconsiderations be reviewed, and when will grantees receive a decision on their reconsideration requests?
4. For each non-continuation, please provide a detailed explanation of how the grantee's approved grant activities are inconsistent with the Department's policy of prioritizing merit, fairness, and excellence in education and violate the letter or purpose of federal civil rights laws.
5. What policies and procedures are being used to reallocate funding revoked from the non-continuation of awards?
 - a. How does the Department plan to ensure funding is reallocated to best support the needs of communities affected by non-continuations?
 - b. Will its reallocation of funds remain in the states and communities directly impacted?
6. Outside of re-distribution of grant funding, how does the administration plan to support students with disabilities, families, schools, teachers and related service professional harmed by the revocation of funds? More specifically, how will these plans follow the law including IDEA and the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*?

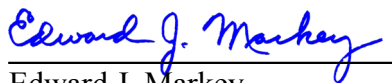
Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Health, Education, Labor,
and Pensions



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Lisa Blunt Rochester
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Andy Kim
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



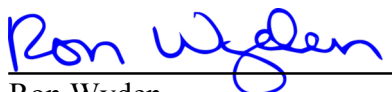
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



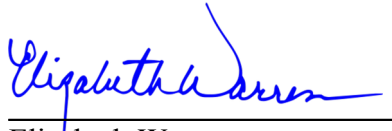
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Elizabeth Warren". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator