

Tell Your Senator to Vote No on Betsy DeVos

President Trump has nominated Elizabeth “Betsy” DeVos to be Secretary of Education. The Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that all children, including children with disabilities, receive a quality education, free from discrimination. Ms. DeVos’s record and testimony at her Senate confirmation hearing disqualify her from leading the Department in this critical mission. We ask you to **call Senators today** to tell them to vote “no” on her nomination for Secretary of Education.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** The IDEA, our federal special education law, requires schools to provide students with disabilities a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. Since 1975, IDEA has made it possible for millions of students with disabilities to attend public schools and receive the supports they need for success. During her confirmation hearing, Ms. DeVos disagreed that all schools that receive special education funding should be subject to the requirements of IDEA. In addition, she suggested that federal IDEA funding should be turned into a voucher program. Students and families who receive vouchers for private schools are often forced to waive their IDEA rights, including the right to FAPE. And vouchers rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition and transportation, making them a false choice for low income families with children with disabilities.
- **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):** In a bipartisan effort in 2015, Congress enacted ESSA, which requires each state to develop a system that holds schools accountable for the academic progress of historically underserved students, including students with disabilities, and to implement schoolwide interventions when students with disabilities underperform year after year. In her hearing testimony, Ms. DeVos would not commit to continuing the Department’s implementation of the ESSA accountability regulations. Nor would she commit to holding all schools that receive federal funding equally accountable for the academic progress of all students, including students with disabilities. She also would not commit to requiring all schools that receive federal funding to report incidents of discipline, bullying, and harassment. Students with disabilities, especially students of color with disabilities, are often subject to bullying, inappropriate use of seclusion and restraint, and discriminatory school discipline like suspensions, expulsions, and law enforcement referrals. We must hold all schools accountable for the education of children with disabilities.
- **Civil Rights Enforcement:** The Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is responsible for enforcing disability rights laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. These laws protect students from disability discrimination and require schools to provide the accommodations and services students with disabilities need to be successful. Yet in her hearing Ms. DeVos refused to disavow efforts to downsize or rein in OCR. We need more support for disability rights enforcement by the Department of Education, not less. If she will not

commit to enforcing our disability rights laws, Ms. DeVos should not be confirmed as Secretary of Education.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

CALL YOUR SENATOR! The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee will vote on Ms. DeVos's nomination on Tuesday, January 31. Please call Senators on the Committee to tell them to vote "no" on the DeVos nomination. Call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at **(202) 224-3121** (the Switchboard line may be busy—you can call back as many times as needed) and ask to be connected to your Senator's office. It's especially important to call if he or she is one of the HELP committee Senators listed below:

Lamar Alexander (R-Tennessee), Chairman
Patty Murray (D-Washington), Ranking (Minority) Member
Michael B. Enzi (R-Wyoming)
Richard Burr (R-North Carolina)
Johnny Isakson (R-Georgia)
Rand Paul (R-Kentucky)
Susan Collins (R-Maine)
Bill Cassidy (R-Louisiana)
Todd Young (R-Indiana)
Orrin Hatch (R-Utah)
Pat Roberts (R-Kansas)
Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska)
Tim Scott (R-South Carolina)
Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont)
Robert P. Casey, Jr. (D-Pennsylvania)
Al Franken (D-Minnesota)
Michael F. Bennet (D-Colorado)
Sheldon Whitehouse (D-Rhode Island)
Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisconsin)
Christopher S. Murphy (D-Connecticut)
Elizabeth Warren (D-Massachusetts)
Tim Kaine (D-Virginia)
Maggie Hassan (D-New Hampshire)

Tell your Senators to vote NO on the DeVos nomination!