

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 20, 2026

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

Dear Secretary McMahon:

We write with serious concerns regarding the Department of Education's potential dereliction of its duty to ensure children in Georgia receive a quality education free from discrimination. Despite this responsibility, the Trump Administration has chosen to fire Department of Education staff and enter into interagency agreements to outsource the agency's formal duties. We have heard from constituents that have been harmed by these actions, and we are concerned this Department will continue to harm Georgia students. We demand that further action to dismantle the Department of Education be stopped and that you provide responses to this letter no later than July 31, 2026.

There are currently 584 pending cases in Georgia before the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR), which is responsible for enforcing federal civil rights laws that protect students from discrimination in schools, colleges, and universities across the country.¹ For Georgia families, these are not just abstract figures – these are students waiting for answers to cases involving disability discrimination, harassment, unequal treatment and access to education.

In March 2025, the Department placed approximately half of OCR's staff on administrative leave and closed seven of its twelve regional offices.² The Government Accountability Office later found that the Department did not fully document or evaluate the costs and savings associated with these actions.³ As the Department attempts to rehire staff, the backlog continues to grow.⁴

Despite promises that enforcement will continue without interruption, it is unclear from Department of Education materials how the new interagency agreement with the Department of

¹ U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, Minority Staff. (2026, April). Justice denied: How Trump's Office for Civil Rights reached a 12-year low in protecting students from discrimination. https://www.sanders.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/04.24.26-Justice-Denied-How-Trumps-Office-for-Civil-Rights-Reached-a-12-Year-Low-in-Protecting-Students-from-Discrimination_FINAL.pdf

² *Id.*

³ U.S. Government Accountability Office (2026, January 29). Department of Education: Full Costs and Savings Estimate Needed for Reduction-in-Force and Restructuring of the Office for Civil Rights. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-26-108320>

⁴ Inside Higher Ed (2026, June 5). After RIFs, ED Turns to Contractor to Hire New Civil Rights Attorneys. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/2026/06/05/after-rifs-ed-turns-contractor-hire-new-ocr-attorneys>

Justice (DOJ) is in students' best interest.⁵ These changes have raised concerns about how OCR will investigate cases, reduce its backlog, and provide timely relief to students and families.

To ensure students and families have the information they need about pending and future cases, please answer the following:

1. What will the Interagency Agreement with DOJ mean for students and families with pending OCR cases, including pending cases in Georgia?
2. Which OCR functions will remain within the Department of Education, which functions will DOJ perform, and which Department will have final responsibility for investigating and resolving cases?
3. What is the current OCR staffing level, how many staff are assigned to investigation and resolution, and what steps is the Department of Education taking to reduce the current backlog?
4. What analysis did the Department of Education conduct before entering into the Interagency Agreement with DOJ regarding case timelines, staffing capacity, legal authority, and the impact on students and families?

Georgia students and families should not have to question whether their civil rights complaint will receive a timely review because of administrative changes within the Department of Education. The Department has a responsibility to enforce federal civil rights law, provide clear accountability, and ensure students receive the protections guaranteed under the law.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


Jon Ossoff
United States Senator
Raphael Warnock
United States Senator

⁵ U.S. Department of Education. (2026, June 16). U.S. Department of Education announces additional partnerships to strengthen coordination for individuals with disabilities programs, bolster civil rights enforcement. <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-announces-additional-partnerships-strengthen-coordination-individuals-disabilities-programs-bolster-civil-rights>