

July 15, 2026

The Honorable Tim Walberg, Chair
The Honorable Robert “Bobby” Scott, Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Joint Union Letter Opposing Legislation to Dismantle the Department of Education by Codifying the Unlawful Interagency Agreements (IAAs)

Dear Chair Walberg and Ranking Member Scott:

We, the undersigned organizations representing millions of public service workers, students, educators and staff, write to express our strong opposition to the Committee on Education & the Workforce’s legislative package, “Less Bureaucracy, Better Education.” This ten-bill package (H.R. 9602–9611) fails to reduce bureaucracy or improve education; instead, it codifies unlawful Interagency Agreements (IAAs) and attempts to ratify an unprecedented and illegal dismantling of the Department of Education that Congress would be required to authorize. By attempting to legitimize executive overreach, this package actively undermines the federal workforce, violates established collective bargaining rights, strips away oversight of critical education programs, and threatens the constitutional authority of Congress. Ultimately, it jeopardizes the vital services that millions of students, educators, families, and educational institutions rely on every day, making it harder for educational opportunities and economic mobility.¹

Congress created the Department of Education (ED) in recognition that the “dispersion of education programs across a large number of Federal agencies has led to fragmented, duplicative, and often inconsistent Federal [education] policies.”² Today, the Department’s major responsibilities include administering federal education programs, supporting state and local education systems, and enforcing civil rights protections for students.³ ED plays a unique role in coordinating these efforts and ensuring accountability. A strong, centralized Department is critical to guarantee that all students, regardless of their background, disability, or zip code, have equal access to opportunity and that federal education investments serve the needs of communities. Dismantling or fragmenting the Department risks undermining these core functions, weakening federal oversight, and eroding access and protections for students, particularly those from underserved communities. The Administration cannot circumvent Congress’s role by transferring these statutory responsibilities to other agencies through administrative agreements, nor should Congress ratify such unlawful dismantling.⁴ The unlawful transfer has already

¹ Floyd, Kings, How Gutting the U.S. Department of Education Would Hurt Students and Their Families, The Century Foundation, February 12, 2025, <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/how-gutting-the-u-s-department-of-education-would-hurt-students-and-their-families/>

² 20 U.S. Code § 3401 – Congressional findings, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/20/3401>

³ U.S. Department of Education, Summary: Investments and Reach of the U.S. Department of Education, January 2025, https://drive.usercontent.google.com/download?id=1NuB7Q4w7CmcSvkjuwFvnOxqP3FYV8caC&authuser=1&acrobatPromotionSource=gdrive_chrome-list

⁴ Education Counsel, Deep Dive: Beyond “The Maximum Extent Permitted By Law,” December 10, 2025, https://educationcounsel.com/our_work/publications/2025-federal-executive-actions/deep-dive-beyond-the-maximum-extent-permitted-by-law-legal-analysis-of-the-u-s-department-of-education-s-transfers-of-programs-to-other-federal-agencies

begun to disrupt educational programs, weaken accountability, and displace experienced public servants who have dedicated their careers to supporting American families.

The consequences of the Administration's actions are significant. Programs administered by ED serve as lifelines to support students across the country, including:

- Career and Technical education programs that equip students with practical skills and pathways to high-demand careers;
- Child Care Access Means Parents in School Partnership (CCAMPIS), which provides child care support for low-income student parents;
- Federal student aid programs that expand access to higher education and long-term economic prospects;
- Full-service community schools that provide wraparound supports to address barriers to learning;
- Title I programs that invest in schools serving low-income students to close achievement gaps;
- TRIO grants that help first-generation and low-income students, veterans, and students with disabilities get prepared to go to college, and
- Twenty-First-Century Community Learning Centers that offer before-school, after-school, and summer learning opportunities.

This legislation also raises broader concerns for the federal workforce and the separation of powers. In the Fiscal Year 2026 spending package, Congress rejected the administration's proposed education cuts, preserved strict funding transfer prohibitions, and enacted bipartisan statutory language declaring the Department of Education has "no authority" to shift its responsibilities to other agencies without explicit congressional approval. Endorsing the post-hoc reassignment of statutory duties sets a dangerous precedent: it invites future administrations to dismantle congressionally mandated agencies by unilateral action, seeking retroactive approval only after the damage is done. This overreach undermines congressional authority, weakens public accountability, and destabilizes the career civil service by stripping workers of critical job protections and dismantling specialized public sector expertise. At a time when schools face severe staffing shortages, rising student needs, and growing civil rights challenges, Congress must strengthen, not hollow out, our federal capacity to support students and safeguard educational equity.

Instead of working with a single expert agency, states and education systems must now navigate various agencies, each with its own processes and priorities. This shift is likely to increase administrative burden and introduce uncertainty around federal compliance and technical assistance. Even short delays or inconsistencies in funding or guidance can disrupt services and force difficult budget decisions at the state and local level.⁵

Beyond legality, replacing ED's responsibilities weakens the expertise and oversight needed to run these programs effectively. Many education programs demand subject-matter expertise and dependable oversight, particularly in the areas of special education, civil rights enforcement, and student financial aid. Fragmenting these responsibilities across multiple agencies that do not have a primary education mission may lack the institutional knowledge or capacity to carry out these responsibilities or uphold federal protections and labor standards, leaving students more vulnerable to inconsistent access to services and gaps in enforcement of their rights.

⁵ Perez, Juan, The Education Department Gave Another Agency Power to Distribute Its Money. It Hasn't Gone Well, Politico, November 24, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/11/24/the-education-department-gave-another-agency-power-to-distribute-money-it-hasnt-gone-smoothly-00663976>

The administration has made clear its desire to eliminate ED to reduce federal involvement in education and inject politics into the classroom in ways that limit students' access to accurate and inclusive information. But in practice, these agreements will expand bureaucracy. Stakeholders will be forced to engage with multiple agencies, making the federal role more complex and less efficient or effective in delivering for the public.

We respectfully urge the Committee to reject this package of bills and oppose any effort to codify the Department's Interagency Agreements (IAAs) or otherwise legitimize the unlawful transfer of the Department of Education's statutory responsibilities. We urge every Member of the Committee to protect the integrity of the federal workforce and preserve independent federal oversight of education programs.

Sincerely,

Daniel Horowitz
American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)

John Gray
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

Kimberly Johnson Trinca
National Education Association (NEA)

Tor Cowan
AFT: Education, Healthcare, Public Services

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American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

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DH/JG/KJT/TC/ESW/JC:af

cc: House Committee on Education and the Workforce