

Bernie Sanders, Ranking Member
Minority Staff Report
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President Trump’s Decision to Gut the Office for Civil Rights has Left Over 46 Million Students Without Protection from Discrimination

President Trump and Elon Musk, the wealthiest person on Earth who runs an online platform that promotes hate, white supremacy, and antisemitism, have gutted protections for students at America’s public schools.

In an attempt to dismantle educational opportunities for children across this nation, President Trump signed an outrageous executive order¹ to abolish the Department of Education, fired half of the workers at the Department, and recklessly fired at least 43 percent of the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) staff, including the entire staff at seven out of 12 of OCR’s regional offices. **Because of Trump’s firings, 46.413 million students in 27 States and territories have been left without dedicated civil rights investigators to protect their rights and investigate their complaints.**

The OCR receives thousands of complaints every year alleging civil rights violations. In fiscal year 2024 alone, OCR received 22,687 complaints—an all-time high. These complaints include students who face antisemitism and Islamophobia, students with disabilities who are harassed and discriminated against at school, girls whose sports teams are treated differently from boys’ teams, students who are sexually harassed or face violence in their schools, and LGBTQ+ students who are bullied. The Department investigates these complaints and works with schools to make sure they resolve them to provide a safe environment for all kids.

The Trump administration has reportedly directed OCR staff to prioritize cases of antisemitism above all else², but the deep staff cuts will only make it *harder* to resolve those cases. **Fired staff in the seven OCR regional offices that were closed were working on 6,896 cases, including 1,870 cases of discrimination based on race and national origin discrimination, were abruptly fired**, leaving thousands of students in potentially unsafe learning environments—or out of school entirely—and without any clear plan for resolution. So far, the Department of Education has not provided any public communications to students or families about these layoffs, any plan for resolving open cases, or any information to schools, colleges, or administrators that regularly work with OCR about how it will ensure continued civil rights enforcement and support.

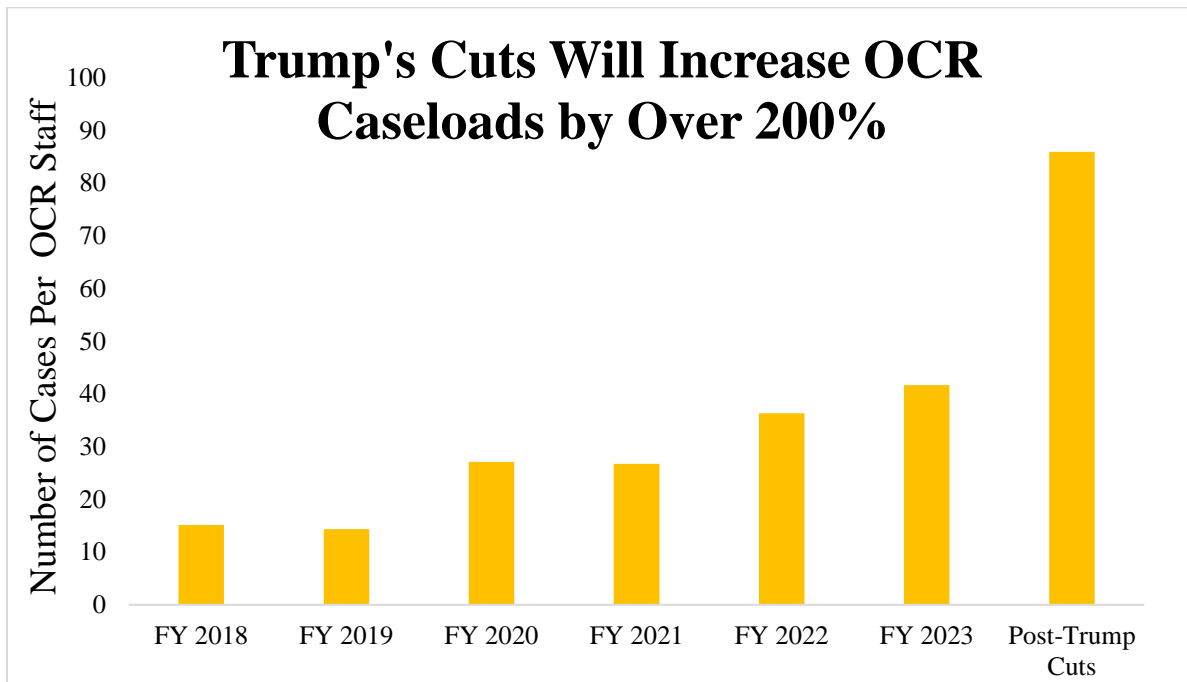
¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/improving-education-outcomes-by-empowering-parents-states-and-communities/>

² <https://apnews.com/article/education-department-civil-rights-special-education-antisemitism-764c1298a4ba856ce793249cdb57e6d6>

Even before the staff cuts, caseloads for civil rights staff were far too high—42 cases per investigator. **Now, due to these drastic cuts, caseloads are expected to explode to an estimated 86 cases per investigator—an increase of 206 percent.** Fewer staff at OCR means fewer investigations conducted and completed and more students who have to deal with ongoing harassment, abuse, and discrimination.

The Department of Education provides enormously important resources to students and schools across this country, especially to 26 million children living in high-poverty school districts, 7 million students receiving Pell Grants to get a higher education, and 9.5 million students with disabilities. It also enforces and protects students’ civil rights to ensure that all students, no matter their race, ethnicity, income, zip code, or disability status, receive a high-quality public education, through the Office for Civil Rights (OCR).

Key Findings:



- As a result of massive staff cuts at OCR, 46.413 million students in 27 States and territories no longer have dedicated civil rights investigators in regional offices who protect their rights and investigate their complaints.
 - 30.7 million K-12 students—over 60 percent of America’s K-12 students—will be less safe in schools.
 - 15.675 million college students’ civil rights will now be less protected on campus.
- In fiscal year 2023, OCR’s average caseload was 42 open cases per investigator. As a result of these drastic cuts, the average caseload is estimated to increase to 86 cases per investigator—an increase of 206 percent.
- The Trump Administration fired the OCR law enforcement officers investigating an estimated 6,896 cases of potential students’ civil rights violations, including:
 - 3,305 cases of potential disability discrimination

- 1,870 cases of potential Title VI violations, including 105 cases regarding national origin discrimination involving religion, 252 cases regarding school discipline, 599 cases of racial harassment, and 10 cases of equitable access to academic coursework.
- 1,654 cases of potential Title IX violations, including 106 cases of athletics, 184 cases of sexual violence, and 483 cases of sexual harassment.

Without the Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Education, there is no guarantee that states, colleges, universities, and local communities will uphold students’ civil and educational rights. In America today, it should not be controversial to say: antisemitism, racism, sexism, ableism homophobia and all forms of bigotry, hate and discrimination are terrible and cannot be tolerated in our society and the Federal government has a responsibility to act to protect students from all forms of hate and bigotry. President Trump’s decision to gut the Department of Education and the Office for Civil Rights means students and parents whose educational rights are violated will be less safe.

Table A: Number of States, Territories, and Students Harmed by the Elimination of the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights’ Regional Offices, Disaggregated by State

States or Territories Losing OCR Regional Offices	Number of Open OCR Cases	Number of K-12 Public School Students	Number of College Students
California	774	5,930,473	3,464,004
Connecticut	129	513,513	254,217
Delaware	48	141,465	71,545
Illinois	330	1,852,242	970,675
Indiana	266	1,036,108	607,483
Iowa	73	511,297	255,877
Kentucky	116	660,029	333,425
Louisiana	200	718,145	307,249
Maine	31	173,853	96,898
Maryland	271	889,960	446,171

Massachusetts	307	923,349	587,206
Michigan	782	1,433,914	595,544
Minnesota	130	870,019	508,931
Mississippi	125	440,285	197,725
New Hampshire	51	158,909	321,771
New Jersey	330	1,383,830	513,266
New York	627	2,532,888	1,424,479
North Dakota	28	118,513	63,734
Ohio	521	1,680,639	811,513
Pennsylvania	330	1,693,347	790,897
Puerto Rico	28	250,668	211,448
Rhode Island	42	137,449	94,034
Texas	1,180	5,519,599	2,083,426
U.S. Virgin Islands	16	10,166	1,982
Vermont	36	83,654	54,726
West Virginia	46	251,224	200,145
Wisconsin	79	823,040	406,726
Total Cases Filed and Students Protected in States or Territories Losing OCR Regional Offices	6,896	30,738,578	15,675,097
Total Cases and Students Nationwide	12,079	49,618,464	25,161,830

Table B: Number of States and Students Harmed by the Elimination of the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights’ Regional Offices, Disaggregated by Regional Office

OCR Regional Office	States or Territories Served	College Students Covered by Each Regional Office	Public K-12 Students Covered by Each Regional Office	Number of Open OCR Cases
Boston	MA, ME, VT, NH, RI, CT	1,408,852	1,990,727	596
Chicago	IL, IN, IA, WI, MN, ND	2,813,426	5,211,219	906
Cleveland	OH, MI	1,407,057	3,114,553	1,303
Dallas	TX, LA, MS	2,588,400	6,678,029	1,505
New York	NJ, NY, VI, PR	2,151,175	4,177,552	1,001
Philadelphia	PA, DE, MD, WV, KY	1,842,183	3,636,025	811
San Francisco	CA	3,464,004	5,930,473	774
Total		15,675,097	30,738,578	6,896

Table C: Examples of the Cases of Discrimination that OCR’s Eliminated Regional Offices Were Investigating

Examples of Cases	Number of Cases
Age Discrimination	42
Boys Scouts Discrimination	1
Disability Discrimination	3,305
Race and National Origin Discrimination	1,870
<i>Title VI - National Origin Discrimination Involving Religion</i>	105

<i>Title VI - Discipline</i>	252
<i>Title VI - Racial Harassment</i>	599
<i>Title VI - Academic Access</i>	10
Sex Discrimination	1,654
<i>Title IX - Athletics</i>	106
<i>Title IX - Sexual Violence</i>	184
<i>Title IX - Sexual Harassment</i>	483

Table: D Caseloads of OCR Staff Based on Presidents' Budget Requests

	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	Post- Trump Cuts (<i>Estimated</i>)
Number of Enforcement Staff	461	474	360	334	318	327	141
Number of Open Cases Under Investigation	6,971	6,792	9,752	8,938	11,559	13,628	12,079
Number of Cases per OCR Full-Time Equivalent Staff	15	14	27	27	36	42	86

Methodology:

Using publicly available K-12 student enrollment data from Fall 2022³, college student enrollment data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System⁴, the caseload per investigative staff from OCR's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request⁵, and the number of pending cases under investigation by OCR (last updated on January 14,

³ https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d23/tables/dt23_203.40.asp

⁴ <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds>

⁵ <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/overview/budget/budget25/justifications/dd-ocr.pdf>

2025)⁶, the HELP Committee minority staff estimated the impact of Trump's decision to eliminate seven regional offices (Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco) at OCR.

⁶ https://ocrcas.ed.gov/open-investigations?field_ois_state=All&field_ois_discrimination_statute=All&field_ois_type_of_discrimination=All&items_per_page=1000&field_ois_institution=&field_ois_institution_type=All&field_open_investigation_date_1=&field_open_investigation_date_2=&field_open_investigation_date_3=