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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
 LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

AMANDA LINCOLN, MAJORITY STAFF DIRECTOR  
 WARREN GUNNELS, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

[www.help.senate.gov](http://www.help.senate.gov)

December 10, 2025

Dear Chair Cassidy,

On November 18, 2025, the Department of Education (Department) announced it had entered into six interagency agreements (IAAs) to transfer over 50 elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education programs covering over \$30 billion in annual funding to federal agencies that do not have the expertise or capacity to administer them. This transfer is an alarming and illegal step toward fulfilling President Trump's threat to eliminate the entire Department.

At a time when U.S. students rank 34<sup>th</sup> in the world in math<sup>1</sup> and academic outcomes have sharply declined since the early 2010s<sup>2</sup>, it is outrageous that the Trump administration is trying to dismantle the only agency dedicated to improving outcomes for all students. Burying education programs in other federal agencies will not help students or support schools and colleges. Rather, it will jeopardize services for tens of millions of students, educators, and families across the country.

These dangerous changes will create chaos and uncertainty for school districts, colleges, and universities who will now have to navigate multiple federal agencies just to get funds they rely on to serve students. Already, this administration has cancelled billions of dollars in education programs, illegally withheld nearly \$7 billion in formula funds, and proposed to fully eliminate many of the programs included in the latest transfer. In our minds, that is unacceptable.

This is not just our view: Margaret Spellings, the Education Secretary under President G.W. Bush said: "Moving programs from one department to another does not actually eliminate the federal bureaucracy, and it may make the system harder for students, teachers and families to navigate and get the support they need."<sup>3</sup> Chester Finn, President Emeritus of the Fordham Institute and a former Department official under President Reagan, called the interagency agreements "confusing to everybody" and "pointless and disruptive for no good reason."<sup>4</sup>

Congress unambiguously vested responsibility for administering education programs with the Department under numerous laws, and Congress explicitly appropriated funding to the Department to carry them out. If Congress wanted the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Interior, or State to administer education programs, Congress would have expressly said so. This illegal action is part of the administration's broader effort to dismantle the Department. Congress established the Department and only Congress has the power to eliminate it, which the Trump administration has acknowledged. That is why Secretary McMahon is using the IAAs to circumvent Congress.

In addition to ignoring the law, Secretary McMahon has broken a commitment she made to this Committee. In her confirmation hearing, you asked Secretary McMahon about her plans to dismantle the

<sup>1</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/pisa2022/#/mathematics/international-comparisons>

<sup>2</sup> <https://edworkingpapers.com/policy-practice-series/ai25-1197>

<sup>3</sup> <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/press-release/margaret-spellings-statement-on-changes-to-the-department-of-education/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/2025/11/24/trump-isnt-first-president-try-break-ed>

Department, and she assured you that she would “make sure that we are presenting a plan that I think our Senators could get on board with and our Congress could get on board with that would have a better functioning Department of Education. But certainly, it does require Congressional action.”<sup>5</sup> However, the Secretary has not upheld that commitment and has unilaterally moved to illegally transfer these programs.

As members of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee we must hold an oversight hearing on this massive and unprecedented transfer of responsibility and federal funding to other agencies. Therefore, we are calling on you to immediately hold a bipartisan oversight hearing to bring Secretary McMahon to testify before the Committee about these interagency agreements.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

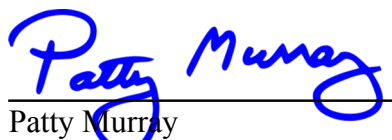
Sincerely,



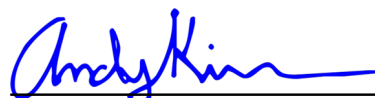
Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator  
Ranking Member, Committee  
on Health, Education, Labor,  
and Pensions



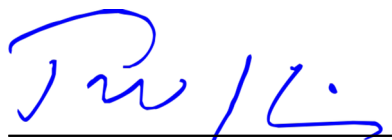
Lisa Blunt Rochester  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator



Andy Kim  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks  
United States Senator

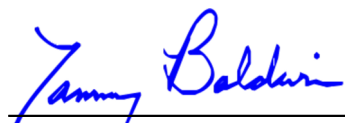


John Hickenlooper  
United States Senator



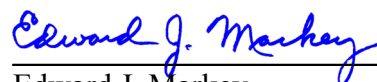
Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/nomination-of-linda-mcmahon-to-serve-as-secretary-of-education>

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Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward J. Markey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "E" and a long, sweeping "M".

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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

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Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator