



Sent Via Email to: Craig.Trainor@ed.gov

March 3, 2025

Craig Trainor
Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-4536

Re: Meeting Request Concerning Operations at the Office of Civil Rights

Dear Acting Assistant Secretary Trainor,

The National Center for Youth Law (“NCYL”) and Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (“COPAA”) submit this letter to express our alarm regarding recent changes at the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (“ED OCR”) and to respectfully request a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss our concerns.

NCYL works to center the voices and experiences of youth blocked from educational, health, and social well-being opportunities—particularly Black youth and youth of color, LGBTQ youth, youth with disabilities, immigrant youth, and youth in child welfare and juvenile systems—and to transform systems to extend equity, dignity and care for children and youth. NCYL also hosts the Education Civil Rights Alliance (“ECRA”), an alliance of diverse groups that use collective action to protect the civil rights of students, especially those who have been historically and presently marginalized due to bias and discrimination. Currently, there are over 115 members of the ECRA—powerful community groups, experienced educators, the nation’s largest teachers’ unions, legal organizations, national associations, civil rights organizations, researchers, and individuals committed to ensuring that schools serve, educate, empower, and are safe for all students.

COPAA is an independent, nonprofit organization of over 3,500+ parents, attorneys, advocates, and related professionals; over 90% of whom identify as having a disability or are parents or family members of individuals with disabilities. COPAA members are active in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and several US territories and work to protect student civil rights and secure excellence in education on behalf of the nearly 8 million students ages 0-21 with disabilities eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the 1.5 million served by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. COPAA’s mission is to serve as a national voice for special education rights and is grounded in the belief that every child deserves the right to a quality education that prepares them for meaningful employment, higher education, and lifelong learning, as well as full participation in their community.

ED OCR plays a critically important role in ensuring that all the nation’s students can learn in an environment free from unlawful discrimination and harassment. Its work has never been more important: in Fiscal Year 2023 ED OCR received more than 19,200 complaints, the highest number of complaints in its history.¹ Despite this heavy caseload, there have been recent troubling reports suggesting that since President Trump’s inauguration on January 20, 2025, there has been a precipitous drop in new investigations opened by ED OCR staff and pending investigations have “ground to a halt.”² These same reports state that ED OCR staff have been limited to working on complaints with solely claims of disability discrimination, despite the large number of race- and sex-based complaints that remain pending with the agency.³ There are other news reports that ED OCR has laid off staff members.⁴ Additionally, on February 14, 2025, your office issued a “Dear Colleague Letter” regarding Title VI enforcement that advanced a number of false or otherwise misleading legal claims and statements.⁵ Most recently, ED OCR announced the launch of EndDEI.Ed.Gov, a public portal that allows parents and other individuals to submit complaints regarding “concerning practices” and “reports of discrimination.”⁶ We are deeply worried that these developments will impair ED OCR’s ability to carry out its mission to protect America’s students from discrimination.⁷

Given these concerns, we are requesting a meeting with you and any other appropriate ED OCR staff as soon as possible. We can be reached at jsmith@youthlaw.org to coordinate logistics for the meeting. We thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Johnathan Smith
Chief of Staff and General Counsel
National Center for Youth Law

¹ U.S. Dep’t of Educ., Off. for C.R. Fiscal Year 2023 *Annual Report to the President and Secretary of Education* (2023), <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/reports/annual/ocr/report-to-president-and-secretary-of-education-2023.pdf>

² Jennifer Smith Richards & Jodi S. Cohen, “*We’ve Been Essentially Muzzled*”: *Department of Education Halts Thousands of Civil Rights Investigations Under Trump*, ProPublica (Feb. 13, 2025), <https://www.propublica.org/article/departments-of-education-civil-rights-office-investigations/>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ See Victoria Delano, *I Was the Department of Education’s Only Civil Rights Monitor in Alabama—Until DOGE Happened*, Mother Jones (Feb. 22, 2025), <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2025/02/education-civil-rights-monitor-fired-doge/>

⁵ ED OCR, Feb. 14, 2025 Dear Colleague Letter. <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/dear-colleague-letter-sffa-v-harvard-109506.pdf>

⁶ Press Release, U.S. Dep’t of Educ., *U.S. Department of Education Launches End DEI Portal* (Feb. 27, 2024), <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-launches-end-dei-portal>

⁷ On March 3, 2025, NCYL and COPAA sent several requests pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”) to ED to learn more about these developments. Those FOIA requests are included here as attachments to this letter.

Selene A. Almazan

Selene Almazan
Legal Director
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