

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

March 20, 2025

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

Dear Secretary McMahon,

We write regarding your and President Trump's ongoing actions that will have a negative impact on our kids. Today, President Trump issued an executive order unlawfully instructing you to dismantle the Department of Education (the Department), a process that you are already implementing – through, among other means, the so-called reduction in force announced on March 11, 2025 and earlier announced personnel changes that would terminate half of the Department's more than 4,100 employees.¹ These illegally dismissed employees include individuals tasked with administering funding for programs serving students with disabilities, protecting students from discrimination, and overseeing federal financial aid.² Students, teachers, and schools across the country rely on the Department's important work to ensure that all people are able to access and grow through education, and we have serious doubts the remaining staff at the Department have the capacity to fulfill this mission. We urge you to reverse these short-sighted decisions before they cause any more damage to America's students, families, and educators.

You have said that the anticipated loss of an additional approximately 1,300 employees announced on March 11, 2025 will not affect the Department's work administering student loans, Pell Grants, funding for students with disabilities, or the Department's numerous competitive grantmaking processes. However, senior officials in the Department have reportedly said that the downsizing will impact "every" sector of the Department, and the illegal layoffs announced on March 11, 2025 include staff from the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) and

¹ The approximately 1,300 employees included in the reduction in force initiated on March 11, 2025 join dozens of probationary employees the Department has already let go, the nearly 600 employees who have reportedly accepted separation packages in recent weeks, and the hundreds of Department employees who have previously been placed on administrative leave. *See Education Department Fires 1,300 Workers, Gutting Its Staff*, New York Times (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/03/11/us/politics/trump-education-department-firings.html); Letter from Democratic Members of Congress to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education and Workforce and Chairman James Comer, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 5, 2025) (online at https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:83befb72-685e-481a-9112-8b33ec15e206?comment_id=562a938b-3dde-4b3f-9f69-a3f73a7d69b6).

² EducationWeek, *Data: Which Ed. Dept. Offices Lost the Most Workers?* (Mar. 13, 2025) (online at www.edweek.org/policy-politics/data-which-ed-dept-offices-lost-the-most-workers/2025/03).

the Office for Civil Rights (OCR).³ We find it difficult to believe that dramatic cuts to the offices that administer these critical services to students, educators, and schools across the country will not impact the Department’s ability to “continue to deliver on all statutory programs that fall under the agency’s purview.”⁴

For example, the Department is responsible for administering and overseeing \$18.4 billion in grant programs that provide supplemental funding to K-12 schools in high poverty areas, \$15.5 billion for educating students with disabilities, and \$1.6 trillion in federal student loans. OCR enforces civil rights laws protecting students from discrimination, including for their race, sex, or disability status.⁵ Disruptions to the programs the Department oversees would threaten many of our most vulnerable students at every level of education and in every state.

As early as February 3, 2025, the Department of Government Efficiency was reportedly working inside the Department to cut staff and programming.⁶ You have acknowledged this announced reduction of force as “the first step to a total shutdown” of the Department.⁷ And today, President Trump issued the Executive Order directing you to “take all necessary step to facilitate the closure [of] the Department of Education and return education authority to the states.”⁸ However it is Congress—not the President, his Administration, or any of his

³ *Trump Preps Order to Dismantle Education Dept. as DOGE Probes Data*, The Washington Post (Feb. 3, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/education/2025/02/03/trump-education-department-dismantling-executive-order-draft/?_pml=1); *U.S. Education Department Says It Is Cutting Nearly Half of All Staff*, NPR (Mar. 12, 2025) (online at www.npr.org/2025/03/11/nx-s1-5324746/trump-education-department-layoffs-closure-reorganization); *Department of Education Lays Off Nearly 50% of Its Workforce*, ABC News (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at <https://abcnews.go.com/US/departments-education-faces-50-layoffs-after-closure-notice/story?id=119690524>).

⁴ See Department of Education, *Press Release: U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force). These layoffs come on top of the hundreds of employees the Department has already placed on administrative leave who work on administering these critical services, including civil rights attorneys, loan service officers, IT personnel, and staff in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. See Letter from Democratic Members of Congress to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education and Workforce and Chairman James Comer, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 5, 2025) (online at https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:83befb72-685e-481a-9112-8b33ec15e206?comment_id=562a938b-3dde-4b3f-9f69-a3f73a7d69b6).

⁵ *Trump Preps Order to Dismantle Education Dept. as DOGE Probes Data*, The Washington Post (Feb. 3, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/education/2025/02/03/trump-education-department-dismantling-executive-order-draft/?_pml=1); *U.S. Education Department Says It Is Cutting Nearly Half of All Staff*, NPR (Mar. 12, 2025) (online at www.npr.org/2025/03/11/nx-s1-5324746/trump-education-department-layoffs-closure-reorganization).

⁶ *Trump Preps Order to Dismantle Education Dept. as DOGE Probes Data*, The Washington Post (Feb. 3, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/education/2025/02/03/trump-education-department-dismantling-executive-order-draft/?_pml=1).

⁷ *Education Department Cutting Nearly Half of Workforce*, CNN (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.cnn.com/2025/03/11/politics/departments-education-cuts).

⁸ *Trump to Sign Order Aiming to Close the Education Department*, NPR (Mar. 19, 2025) (online at www.npr.org/2025/03/19/nx-s1-5333861/trump-executive-action-education-department).

associates—who has the authority to close the Department.⁹ This Executive Order and the ongoing staff reductions are designed to effectively shutter the Department, and they usurp Congress’s authority. They are also counter to the will of the American people, the majority of whom oppose efforts to close the Department.¹⁰

The approximately 1,300 employees who you wish to leave the Department are dedicated public servants who have devoted their careers to serving their country and ensuring that all students are able to learn and to thrive, regardless of race, gender, disability, or zip code. Discarding thousands of civil servants without regard for their job performance is an attack on those hardworking and passionate individuals as well as our government and the critical services it provides.

To ensure that education across the country can continue without disruption, the Trump Administration must rescind this unlawful executive order, abandon these illegal reductions in force, and restore all employees improperly terminated. We also request the following information and answers to the following questions by March 27, 2025:

1. Any and all decision memos or final documents:
 - a. Authorizing a reduction in force;
 - b. Providing the legal basis for the reduction in force announced on March 11, 2025;
 - c. Stating whether or not the March 11, 2025 reduction in force will violate the Impoundment Control Act or the Antideficiency Act;
2. A list of every statutory responsibility entrusted to the Department that:
 - a. You considered in announcing your illegal mass terminations;
 - b. You failed to consider in announcing your illegal mass terminations;
 - c. You will continue to abide by irrespective of an order from President Trump, Elon Musk, the Department of Government Efficiency, or any entity of the Department;
3. The precise number of employees scheduled for termination as a result of the March 11, 2025 announcement;

⁹ *Trump Preps Order to Dismantle Education Dept. as DOGE Probes Data*, The Washington Post (Feb. 3, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/education/2025/02/03/trump-education-department-dismantling-executive-order-draft/?_pml=1); *Education Department Fires 1,300 Workers, Gutting Its Staff*, New York Times (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/03/11/us/politics/trump-education-department-firings.html).

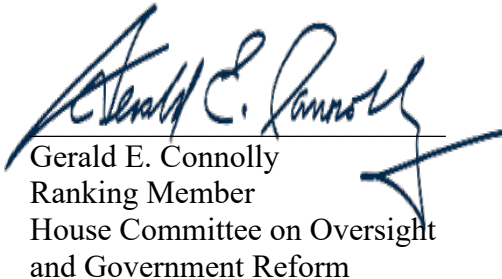
¹⁰ *Education Department Fires 1,300 Workers, Gutting Its Staff*, New York Times (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/03/11/us/politics/trump-education-department-firings.html).

4. A detailed description of the criteria the Department used to determine:
 - a. Which offices are subject to the Department's announced "reduction in force";
 - b. Which employees will be terminated as part of the mass firing of approximately 1,300 employees on March 11, 2025;
5. Confirmation that no employee has been made subject to the announced reduction in force in violation of any applicable laws, regulations, policy, or procedures;
6. For each of the programs below, many of which you have stated the Department "will continue to deliver on," what data will the Department use to measure how that program was performing prior to March 11, 2025, between March 11 and March 21, and after March 21, 2025?
 - a. Formula funding
 - b. Federal student loans
 - c. Pell Grants
 - d. Funding for students with disabilities
 - e. Competitive grantmaking;
 - f. The Office of Civil Rights;
7. A list of every office and division in the Department and the number of employees from that office/division that will be part of the reduction in force announced on March 11, 2025;
8. A list of the title and office of every employee in the Department subject to the reduction in force announced on March 11, 2025;
9. A description of how any component subject to reorganization was structured prior to March 11, 2025 and will be structured going forward;
10. What data will the Department use to measure whether the reorganization or reduction in force of these divisions will "better serve students, parents, educators, and taxpayers"?
11. What Department components or functions that existed within the Department prior to January 20, 2025 does the Department intend to move to another federal agency, including but not limited to, the Treasury Department, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Labor?
 - a. How many employees were employed by each of these components prior to January 20, 2025?;

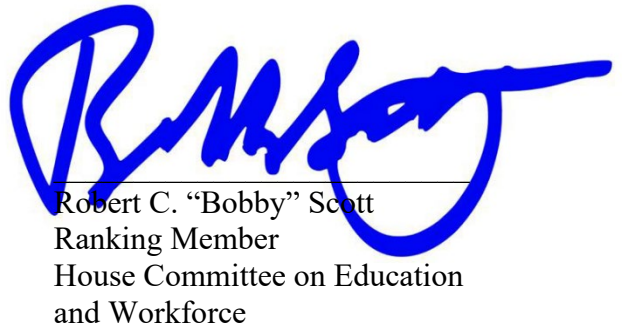
- b. How many employees were employed by each component in the agency where the Department intends to move a given component or function (i) prior to January 20, 2025 and (ii) as of March 20, 2025?; and
- c. How many employees would be employed by each of these components—within the Department or any other federal agency—after the March 11, 2025 reduction in force is scheduled to be completed?

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X; it also has legislative jurisdiction over federal personnel. Per that same rule, the Committee on Education and Workforce has principle oversight over “Education... generally,” and the “Organization, administration, and general management of the Department of Education.” If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Gerald E. Connolly
Ranking Member
House Committee on Oversight
and Government Reform



Robert C. “Bobby” Scott
Ranking Member
House Committee on Education
and Workforce

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

The Honorable Tim Walberg, Chairman, House Committee on Education and Workforce