Protect Children with Disabilities: Do Not Dismantle the U.S. Department of Education

Tools for personalized advocacy. Help reach local/state digital news. Use the templates below to raise awareness through your local news in support of children with disabilities and their families regarding harmful actions taken by the U.S. Department of Education that threatens implementation of and full access to promise and protections of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

A Personal Appeal (100 words)-For Email/Social Media

How To Find Your Senator(s) and Representative email address: Visit congress.gov and put your zip code into the box at the top. This will generate contact information for your elected federal policymakers.

As a (person with a disability/parent of a child with a disability/teacher/principal) from (X city/state), I am asking (use @ handle for social post) Senator X, Senator X, and Representative X to stand with students with disabilities, their families, their teachers, and the professionals who serve them. We need you to **halt all dismantling of the Department of Education**, stop the relocation of critical offices, and protect the expertise needed to uphold all the rights of our children.

A strong, functional Department of Education is essential to the success, safety, and future of millions of U.S. children with disabilities. **Please do not let them down.**

Letter to the Editor (LTE) or Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed): Why Dismantling the Department of Education Will Devastate Children With Disabilities

Note: This is a template. Pick one or two of the reasons that resonate with you and your experience. A typical LTE is between 150 and 250 words, though the length can vary by publication and many newspapers have an upper limit of around 200-300 words. An Op-Ed may also be requested and approved by your local news editor according to their requirements. It's crucial to check the publication's specific guidelines for their requirements and word count. They often have strict limits so they can include varying perspectives and print more letters.

Opening Options:

- **In response to a published article (assumes you disagree w/article):** In direct response to (X article/name by X, I write to disagree with X [author name] and the position that [X, e.g., the U.S. Department of Education can be dismantled and will not impact children or schools in our X/town/school district/state] – OR-
- **Direct appeal to print news/editorial board**: On November 18, Secretary Linda McMahon moved six key offices out of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) — a major step toward dismantling the agency entirely. As a (person with a disability / parent of a child with a disability / teacher / principal), I am deeply opposed to these actions. Eliminating or hollowing out ED will directly harm millions of children, especially those with disabilities who rely on federally enforced rights, services, and protections every single day.

For students with disabilities, the Department of Education is not another layer of bureaucracy. It is the backbone of civil rights enforcement in America's public schools.

Pick one or two points from the reasons below that resonate with you:

1. ED enforces disability civil rights when schools fail to.

Through the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), ED investigates discrimination and ensures students with disabilities receive the education they are legally entitled to. Today, **over 25,000 cases are pending in OCR**, most involving children with disabilities. (insert if you have filed a complaint/exercised this right). The demand for oversight is overwhelming — and growing. Without ED, these protections vanish.

2. ED ensures states follow the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

States have done a poor job of monitoring themselves. ED was created in 1979 precisely because states were failing their legal obligations: millions of children with disabilities were segregated, denied education and services, or institutionalized. Removing ED would unravel **50 years of civil rights progress** and return us to an era when disability discrimination was unchecked.

3. ED protects disability funding from being diverted or misused.

ED distributes billions in IDEA funds for, teacher and specialized training grants, early intervention programs, parent training resources, targeted research, and assistive technology supports. Without federal oversight, states can — and historically did — divert money away from students with disabilities. ED ensures that funding reaches schools and the children it was intended to serve: the therapies, accessible technology, transportation, and specialized instruction children need and families depend on.

4. ED gives all families a way to seek justice.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is obligated to conduct robust monitoring and OCR's complaint process provides **free, accessible pathways** when schools fail to provide

mandated services. Without ED, only families who can afford or have access to lawyers would have recourse — leaving rural, low-income, and other communities with essentially nowhere to turn.

5. ED guarantees a national baseline of rights no matter where a child lives.

Before IDEA, **1.75 million children with disabilities were excluded entirely from school**, and millions more received inadequate or segregated services. Federal oversight prevents states from lowering expectations or cutting corners. The consistency matters for all but especially military families and those who regularly move. A child in Mississippi deserves the same rights as a child in Massachusetts — and only ED ensures that.

6. ED provides the expert guidance schools rely on.

From accessible materials to evidence-based instruction, ED develops essential national guidance, interprets the law, funds research, and provides credible technical assistance. Eliminating ED would leave educators without support, create a patchwork of inconsistent policies, and widen inequities between states.

7. ED collects the national data necessary to protect students.

The Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) and IDEA data systems uncover disparities in discipline, restraint and seclusion, access to general education, and more. Without ED, this data disappears — and so do the tools to hold systems accountable.
