



March 25, 2025

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Saving Federal Education Data, Statistics, and Research

Dear Majority Leader Thune, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Johnson, and Minority Leader Jeffries,

We write with an urgent request that you intervene through your oversight responsibilities in the Administration's sudden, arbitrary termination of more than 1,300 employees across the U.S. Department of Education. This action has resulted in barely a skeletal staff at the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), leaving only three staff remaining at the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and just slightly over 20 staff to execute the vital functions of the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), the National Center for Education Research (NCER), and at the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSE), the four centers within IES. In addition, 243 employees from the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) were terminated, and seven OCR offices were closed; data and resources that inform policy and enforcement are also potentially at stake.

This sweeping reduction, coupled with last month's mass cancellation of contracts and since followed by the March 20, 2025 Executive Order, Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities, dismantles the Department's essential research and statistics agencies and their key functions, preventing them from executing their Congressionally mandated responsibilities. Congress established IES within the Department of Education through the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA) of 2002. NCES was established in statute dating back over 150 years. ESRA requires IES to fund specific education research topics, collect and report statistics including through the annual Condition of Education, conduct evaluations, and stand up 10 Regional Educational Laboratories. Without staff in place to conduct these functions, IES cannot meet its congressional mandates. We turn to Congress to ensure critical legitimate Federal functions of the Education Department are not lost, specifically that IES is restored as an independent, apolitical unit to serve education and the public good and that, within it, NCES, founded in 1867 and the second oldest statistical agency in the U.S., is not obliterated as one of 13 primary statistical agencies.

Under your leadership, Congress must act to protect the nation's education data, research infrastructure, and knowledge base, by safeguarding the IES and broader USED staff, leadership, and mission. For example, with respect to the nation's education data, beyond the congressionally mandated National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—The Nation's Report Card—Congress has charged NCES with the responsibility for collecting critical data that identify trends, patterns, and disparities in education¹. The OCR produces the most comprehensive data on civil rights through the biannual Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), which is used by schools, researchers, and policy makers.² While not specifically named in statute, data collections such as the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Survey of School Crime and Safety, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, and other data collections are used to meet the requirements for data which are specified in statute.

¹ 20 U.S. Code § 9543

² Sections 1111(h)(1)(C)(viii) and 1111(h)(2)(C) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended in 2015 by the Every Student Succeeds Act, require state educational agencies (SEA) and LEAs that receive Title I funds under the ESEA to include in their state and local report cards certain CRDC data. This obligation became effective on December 31, 2018 for the 2017-18 school year.

The work of IES, and specifically NCES in this case, provides policymakers, educational leaders, researchers, families, and the business community with indispensable insights into the state of education nationwide, from pre-K through postsecondary and adult education. Data collected by NCES is not only used directly, but provides critical frame and weighting data for research work undertaken by organizations outside the government. It is not an exaggeration to say that without NCES data, much of the education research in America will come to a halt. These efforts drive evidence-based policies, innovations, and best practices in communities, districts, states, and regions across the country.

The Administration's unprecedented actions are destroying the federal government's data infrastructure and undermining necessary support for states, school districts, and institutions in improving education at all levels. The federal government plays an irreplaceable role in providing high-quality, objective, trustworthy, and nonpartisan education data nationwide—work that cannot be replicated at the same economy of scale by states, local agencies, or the private sector. The data collected by the federal government are essential for efficient disbursement of federal resources. If Congress fails to intervene and fulfill its constitutional responsibilities, the consequences will be far-reaching. Ultimately, it will be students, educators, communities, and the nation that bear the cost.

On behalf of 40,000 or more education researchers working in higher education, research organizations, foundations, governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, and businesses in every state and district in the United States who are part of our research organizations alone, we seek your help, as further delay will only bring further damage. We stand ready to help, to meet, and to provide compelling examples of the consequences of eliminating the crucial work of NCES, NCEE, NCER, and NCSER, the four centers within IES.

Sincerely,

American Educational Research Association

Janelle Scott, Ph.D., President

Felice J. Levine, Ph.D., Executive Director

Association for Education Finance & Policy

Michal Kurlaender, Ed.D., President

Roberta M. Herman, MBA, Executive Director

Association for the Study of Higher Education

Eboni M. Zamani-Gallaher, Ph.D., President

Jason P. Guilbeau, Ph.D., CAE, Executive Director

Division for Research, Council for Exceptional Children

Jessica R. Toste, Ph.D., President

The International Society of the Learning Sciences

Jasmine Y. Ma, Ph.D., President

Stephanie D. Teasley, Ph.D., Executive Officer

Literacy Research Association

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Elizabeth Tipton, Ph.D., President

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Karen Stansberry Beard, Ph.D., President

Mónica Byrne-Jiménez, Ed.D., Executive Director

Cc: Chairman Tim Walberg, House Education and Workforce Committee

Ranking Member Bobby Scott, House Education and Workforce Committee

Chair Bill Cassidy, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

Ranking Member Bernie Sanders, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions