

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 25, 2017

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor
Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor
Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As your subcommittee prepares to consider the FY 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Bill, we write to urge your continued investment in ensuring equal access to education by providing \$137.7 million, or at a minimum the FY2017 enacted amount of \$108.5 million for the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

The OCR is essential to ensuring that all students have access to an education free from discrimination, harassment and violence. Through the "vigorous enforcement of civil rights," the OCR has played a significant role in creating a safe, inclusive environment for all students. One such avenue it has used to do this is through the Civil Rights Data Collection Tool. This tool provides wide ranging education access and equity data from public schools, ensuring that no group of students is left behind.

Further, the OCR has worked tirelessly to end discriminatory discipline and improve school climate. It has done this through helping schools find ways to explore the root causes of racial disparities and assist them in implementing interventions and supports, as well as through thorough civil rights investigations.


One of the most visible issues that the OCR has played a significant role in is the enforcement of institutions' obligations under Title IX. For example, policy guidance from OCR has gone beyond an explanation of legal obligations to include guidelines for designating a Title IX coordinator, dissemination of non-discrimination ordinances, and evidentiary standards in discipline proceedings. OCR has held educational institutions accountable for the way they respond to violations of Title IX.

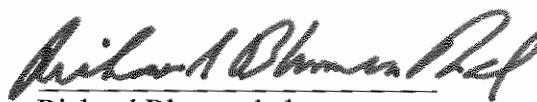
The Civil Rights Data Collection tool, Title IX enforcement, and discipline policy guidance are just a few of the many areas in which OCR worked to help maintain transparency and protect students' rights. They have also worked to create protections for transgender students and students with disabilities, as well as support for English language learners.


Every student deserves a chance to learn, explore their talents, and be successful regardless of their race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other characteristics or ability. The OCR has done important work to ensure that this is a


reality—and this work needs to continue. We ask for continued and robust funding for this vital department to ensure that our nation’s most vulnerable students have protections they need so that they can have access to an equal education.


Sincerely,



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

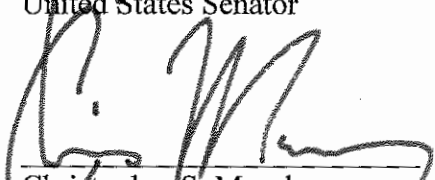

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

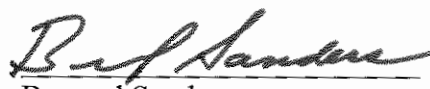

Kamala Harris
United States Senator

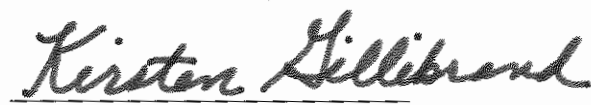

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

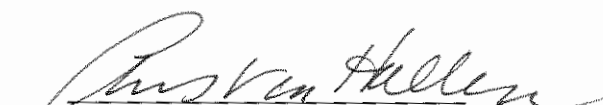

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator


Brian Schatz
United States Senator


Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator


Bernard Sanders
United States Senator


Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator


Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator