

CALL TO ACTION: PROTECT OUR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Dear Members of Congress,

I am writing to you not only as a parent of a child with a rare genetic disorder, Prader-Willi syndrome (PWS), but also as a deeply concerned advocate for children with disabilities across the country. I am a constituent in the state of _____. Our children depend on the protections and oversight provided through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and I am alarmed by the recent actions of the U.S. Department of Education. I urge you to take immediate action to protect the rights of these children.

The Department has eliminated hundreds of jobs through what appears to be an illegal Reduction in Force (RIF). As I understand it, the RIF affects nearly all staff in key divisions and will directly harm students with disabilities. This decision sends a disheartening message that our children are not valued and has already created confusion and chaos in states, districts, and schools across the nation.

These cuts have gutted the very offices responsible for protecting and supporting children with disabilities, including the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) and the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). These offices oversee the implementation of IDEA, which serves more than 8 million children ages 0–21, and administer critical funding to ensure states uphold their responsibilities. Other cuts have also impacted programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which supports ALL schools, particularly those serving low-income children.

When the federal staff responsible for supporting, monitoring, and enforcing IDEA are removed, the message is clear: children with disabilities are no longer a priority. This action dismantles fifty years of bipartisan progress and undermines the foundation of accountability, inclusion, and access to education for students who rely on these protections.

As a parent of a child with Prader-Willi syndrome (PWS), I know firsthand how essential IDEA is. My child's safety and success depends on trained school staff, consistent oversight, and the federal accountability that ensures schools provide appropriate supports and services. Without the stability and leadership provided by OSEP and OSERS, children like mine are left vulnerable to inequitable treatment, denied supports that are necessary for their safety, and inconsistent implementation of their legal rights.

Congress established IDEA to guarantee that the rights of students with disabilities are not subject to shifting political priorities. The RIF directly circumvents the will of Congress and dismantles decades of precedent upholding the rights and opportunities of our children. The IDEA statute requires the Secretary of Education to lead, direct, and oversee federal activities that are permanently established into law. Members of Congress, on both sides of the aisle, have long agreed that families, educators, and states need stability and assurance that the law and its funding are protected. Access to a free and appropriate public education under IDEA is not optional, and it should never be compromised.

Decimating the Department of Education in this way disrespects and disregards the requirements of the law and the trust of the families it serves.

I urge you to take immediate action to protect our children with disabilities and pressure the Department of Education to reinstate the eliminated staff positions. Upholding IDEA is not just a legal obligation; it is a moral one. Our children deserve stability, oversight, and a system that values their right to learn, grow, and thrive.

With gratitude and determination,

Parent of a Child with a Disability and a Voter!