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July 29, 2026

Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our 3 million members and the 50 million students they serve, we would like to share our views and recommendations on several bills and amendments that are being marked up tomorrow. Votes on these issues may be included in NEA's report card for the 119th Congress.

VOTE YES on S. 5046 to prohibit transferring specified Department of Education offices and functions to other federal agencies—as well as any amendments to prevent implementing current or future inter-agency agreements (IAAs).

The Trump administration's illegal push to dismantle the Department of Education (ED) promises "less bureaucracy." In reality, it is hurting the students who are our nation's future leaders and workforce, while creating more bureaucracy and new hurdles for those seeking to educate our nation's youth.

Last year, for example, the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) was transferred from ED to the Department of Labor (DOL)—a change that necessitated using two systems instead of one to manage roughly \$2 billion in grants, greatly complicating the process for states and grantees. Some states did not have full access to funds until December 2025, a significant delay that resonated across states and school districts. Moreover, while DOL maintains that ED experts would actually run the programs, few such experts remain—reductions-in-force, buyouts, and early retirements have stripped ED of nearly half its staff, and more have resigned.

VOTE NO on the Special Education Administration Protection Act (S. 5038) and an extreme amendment to the bill introduced by Senator Rand Paul.

The underlying bill would prohibit transferring functions of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Such functions could still be transferred to other federal agencies similarly lacking in the experience and expertise necessary to carry out what Congress intended.

The Paul amendment would radically alter the federal approach to K-12 funding, creating an extensive private-school voucher scheme that would replace nearly all programs now governed by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B. The resulting loss of funding would undermine the public schools that educate the vast majority of our students—9 out of 10.

VOTE YES on the Respond, Innovate, Succeed, and Empower (RISE) Act (S. 3589). This bipartisan bill would make it easier for students with disabilities to transition from high school to college and receive accommodations. Those who have already documented a qualifying learning disability—ADHD or autism, for example—would be less likely to have to pay for a new evaluation before receiving accommodations in college. Institutions would also receive enhanced guidance on serving students with disabilities.

We also have concerns about the Reading Excellence and Achievement for Development (READ) Act (S. 4689). While we support the committee's focus on comprehensive K-12 literacy instruction, we are concerned that this bill could restrict effective instruction among multilingual and other student populations. Literacy policy should both support evidence-based instruction and preserve educators' ability to use the full range of research-based strategies.

We thank the committee for the opportunity to submit these comments and recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kimberly Johnson Trinca', written in a cursive style.

Kimberly Johnson Trinca
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association