



March 10, 2025

The Honorable Tim Walberg  
Chair  
House Education and the Workforce Committee

The Honorable Bobby Scott  
Ranking Member  
House Education and the Workforce Committee

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

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

Dear Chair Walberg, Ranking Member Scott, Chair Cassidy, and Ranking Member Sanders,

On behalf of America Forward and the America Forward Coalition, we write to express our deep concern regarding reported upcoming executive actions to diminish the capacity of, and potentially eliminate, the Department of Education.

The America Forward Coalition represents 100+ non-government social innovation organizations, many of whom focus on education services ranging from early learning to K-12 education to postsecondary education and workforce training. Working in all 50 states and over 15,000 communities nationwide, America Forward Coalition members are committed to data-driven, evidence-informed strategies that improve outcomes for all students and our country as a whole.

First, we are alarmed by reports that the Trump-Vance Administration is considering a crippling, abrupt reduction in force across staff at the Department of Education. This action would follow the Administration's recent eliminations of probationary positions; placement of key employees on administrative leave; and cancellation of invaluable grants and contracts – such as teacher training funding and dozens of in-process research projects at the Institute of Education Sciences. The reported reduction in force would likely have an extensive negative impact on the Department's operations in at least the short- and medium-term, seriously threatening the efficiency and effectiveness of federal funding while disrupting operations of educational institutions and their partners around the country. The blunt impact of a broad reduction in force risks, for example, a repeat of the massive disruption that occurred in the previous FAFSA cycle.

Second, we are deeply concerned by the reported prospect of executive action to eliminate the Department as a whole. The Department plays a critical role in supporting student achievement and preparing our nation's workforce. As you know, and as Secretary McMahon recognized in her nomination hearing, legislation mandates nearly all functions and programs of the Department and only Congress can eliminate the Department. While we support efforts to improve the functioning of the Department and its programs – for instance, to reform the structure of the Office of Federal Student Aid – we are concerned about the prospect of major changes outside of an intentional, evidence-based process that involves Congress. There are valuable operational complementarities under the present structure which places the majority of programs related to learning and educational institutions under one agency, reflecting the interwoven reality of our nation's education system. Policymakers should carefully consider the potential long-term benefits and costs of such blunt-edged drastic action versus a more measured evidence-based approach to organizational reform.

We urge you to engage the Trump-Vance Administration to address this matter, and appreciate your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Smolover". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Deborah" being more prominent.

Deborah Smolover  
Executive Director  
America Forward