



Remarks presented by Liz King  
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My name is Liz King and I am the director of education policy at The Leadership Conference Education Fund, an organization that builds public will for federal policies that promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States. Ensuring that all children are safe – and are welcomed – in schools is incredibly important to our organization, our partners, and the communities we represent. We urge the commission to hear from the full diversity of marginalized communities about discrimination, bullying, harassment, guns, seclusion, restraint, and other topics related to school safety. Recognizing the ways that discrimination makes children unsafe in schools, I brought a letter with me signed by 153 organizations supporting the preservation of the 2014 school discipline guidance – guidance wrongfully targeted by this commission.

The Department of Education is a civil rights agency. Since its creation, the department has served the important role of advocating for children and their rights when states, schools, and districts did the wrong thing. Discrimination is serious. It is also illegal. These laws exist to protect children from harm. The reason for their creation has not gone away. Suspension and expulsion cause real harm to children without providing any educational benefit. The fact that children of color, children with disabilities, and LGBTQ children face these harms more often means the need to prevent it is even greater.

All children deserve to be safe and treated fairly in schools, but that goal cannot be achieved by undermining their civil rights or excluding their communities from conversations about their safety. This administration has taken one action after another to make schools less safe for LGBTQ students, sexual assault survivors, immigrant children, and any child who experiences systemic discrimination. It's time for this administration to reverse course and provide educators and schools the resources and information they need to protect children and support their learning, development, and success, not make it easier for them to kick children of color out of school.

We encourage this commission to support robust enforcement of our civil rights laws, to protect ALL children from discrimination, and to preserve the policy and enforcement guidance currently assisting schools in complying with our federal laws. This administration's actions have served to undermine the safety and success of LGBTQ students, immigrant students, students of color, students with disabilities, women and girls, and all students and the commission must push this administration to change direction and support children's safety in their schools and communities.

Our children deserve better. They deserve the support and protection – not the antagonism – of this president and his cabinet.