



August 26, 2019

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The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-6200

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-6200

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member, Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Scott, and Ranking Member Foxx:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, and the 19 undersigned organizations, **we write to strongly urge you to ensure safe and inclusive campus climates free of harassment and violence, including sexual harassment, gender-based harassment and violence, and other forms of harassment and violence based on race, national origin, religion, disability, or any combination thereof, and ensure that campus programs, policies, and practices are inclusive, equitable, fair, and advance the safety and well-being of all students through the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA).** HEA, if it is to advance equity and protect civil rights in higher education, must address barriers to student safety and inclusion.

Recognizing that the HEA is civil rights law enacted to expand equal opportunity in higher education, the Higher Education Civil Rights coalition convened by The Leadership Conference Education Fund recently released our agenda for federal higher education policy.¹ This document includes recommendations to ensure safe and inclusive campus

¹ See: [Civil Rights Principles for Higher Education: Policy recommendations to achieve equity and protect civil rights.](#)

climates, in addition to other areas where action is needed to advance equity and protect civil rights. As conversations about campus climate and the reauthorization continue, we urge you to include the following policies in any bill:

Require schools to take proactive steps to prevent harassment and violence by:

- Having enumerated anti-harassment policies
- Administering climate surveys
- Tracking and reporting incidents of hate speech on campus
- Collecting data regarding police contact with students
- Strengthening protections for students to be free from racial harassment on campus

Require schools to address harassment and violence by:

- Providing culturally competent resources and accommodations, particularly for students of color, LGBTQ students, and students with disabilities
- Providing resources to survivors of gender-based violence at no cost to them

Require schools to put in place procedures that respond to harassment and violence in a fair and equitable way by:

- Addressing both on- and off-campus harassment that creates a hostile environment, guaranteeing both complainants and respondents equal rights to appeal
- Prohibiting schools from punishing survivors for drug/alcohol use or consensual sex acts prior to their assault
- Prohibiting schools from mediating sexual assault cases, using sexual history evidence, or mandating police referrals

Every student pursuing postsecondary education has the right to expect that they will be safe and included. Without these policy changes, students will be less likely to persist and complete their education and our nation will lose the benefit of their education. We look forward to the opportunity to discuss these priorities, as well as the other principles and recommendations we have outlined. Students on every campus across the country are counting on you and your leadership to ensure that they have the opportunity to fulfill their potential. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact CJ Powell, higher education program analyst at The Leadership Conference, at powell@civilrights.org or (202) 263-2880.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Federation of Teachers
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Center for Responsible Lending
CLASP

Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Feminist Majority Foundation
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Indian Education Association
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
The Education Trust
UnidosUS
Young Invincibles