

**February 25, 2025**

**Subject:** Protect the Department of Education to Safeguard America's Democracy

Dear Michigan Congressional Delegation,  
Rep. Tom Barrett  
Rep. Jack Bergman  
Rep. Debbie Dingell  
Rep. Bill Huizenga  
Rep. John James  
Rep. Lisa C. McClain  
Rep. Kristen McDonald Rivet  
Rep. John R. Moolenaar  
Sen. Gary Peters  
Rep. Hillary J. Scholten  
Sen. Elissa Slotkin  
Rep. Haley M. Stevens  
Rep. Shri Thanedar  
Rep. Rashida Tlaib  
Rep. Tim Walberg

As elected school board members and leaders entrusted with shaping the future of our nation, we write to urge you to protect the US Department of Education (DOE) from any proposals to eliminate or weaken it. The DOE's vital role in advancing educational equity, supporting state and local education systems, and ensuring the civil rights of all students cannot be overstated. Its closure would have devastating consequences for millions of students, educators, and families across Michigan and the United States.

Our kids all deserve the opportunity to learn and grow, regardless of where they come from. This is why parents, teachers, and school board members across Michigan and the country are working together to ensure that every child gets a quality public education that allows them to reach their full potential, no matter their race or background. The DOE is vital to ensuring that our country's vision for public education remains a priority.

With current administration threatening to either close or severely cut the DOE's budget, we urge Congressional representatives to advocate on behalf of our public schools.

Here are a few reasons the DOE is essential to ensuring that every student has access to a high-quality public education:

- Each year, the DOE administers over \$100 billion to states, schools, and higher education institutions—just two percent of our federal budget. These funds strengthen public education systems to ensure educational opportunities for all students. This

funding also directly benefits the families and communities who are either employed in our local public schools or provide services to those schools.

- The DOE plays a critical role in enforcing civil rights laws that protect students from discrimination based on race, gender, disability, or language. For example:
  - **Title IX:** Protects students from gender-based discrimination.
  - **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Special Education Funding:** Provides 7.6 million students with disabilities access to free and appropriate public education, and eases the financial burden on states and localities.
  - **Title I:** Provide \$17 billion annually to schools serving over 25 million low-income students.
- The DOE provides **Pell Grants** to nearly 7 million low-income students so that they can afford higher education and improve their own and their families' well-being. Pell Grants have been shown to reduce the affordability gap for lower-income students, which leads to more people being able to enroll and complete programs in higher education.
- The DOE partners with states and local school districts to implement key initiatives such as teacher training, literacy and STEM education, and evidence-based programs to improve student outcomes. During crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, it distributed billions through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER), helping schools remain operational and safe.

A well-educated population is essential for maintaining the United States' global competitiveness. Programs overseen by the DOE prepare students for 21st-century jobs and address critical skill gaps. Research demonstrates that every \$1 invested in public education yields \$2.50 in economic benefits.

Closing or crippling the DOE would disrupt billions of dollars in federal funding, leaving states to fill the gaps. In Michigan, the closing of the DOE would mean that our communities would suffer the loss of approximately \$440 million for Title I programs, and will be forced to take drastic measures to meet the budgeting shortfall. This will impact low-income communities the hardest, who don't have the resources from tax revenues that wealthier communities have, and will increase educational inequities further in rural and urban schools that are reliant on federal support.

Education has long been a shared American value, with bipartisan support for the DOE's work to expand access to education and narrow achievement gaps. Closing the DOE would dismantle decades of progress and harm students across the nation.

Defending the DOE is not a partisan issue—it's about safeguarding the future of our children, our economy, and our democracy. We urge you to reject any proposals to close the Department of Education and instead advocate for strengthening its capacity to serve all Americans.

The Department of Education is a cornerstone of America's commitment to educational excellence and equity. Protecting it is essential to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed. We ask you to stand with students, families, and educators across Michigan and the country by preserving and enhancing this critical institution.

Sincerely,

State School Board  
Dr. Pamela Pugh  
Ellen Lipton  
Tiffany Tilley  
Judy Pritchett  
Mitchell Robinson

Allegan County  
Jill Dunham, Plainwell Community Schools

Berrien County

*Benton Harbor Area Schools Board of Education stands unified as one Board for this cause*

- Elnora Gavin, Benton Harbor Area Schools
- Dashuna Robinson, Benton Harbor Area Schools
- Angela Doyle, Benton Harbor Area Schools
- Trenton Bowens, Benton Harbor Area Schools
- Reinaldo Tripplett, Benton Harbor Area Schools
- Matthew Bradley, Benton Harbor Area Schools
- Stephanie Rockette-Martin, Benton Harbor Area Schools

Stephen Donnelly, New Buffalo Area Schools

Eaton County

Kali Stevens, Grand Ledge Public Schools  
Coban Holmes, Grand Ledge Public Schools

Genesee County

Melody Relerford, Flint Community Schools  
Terae King Jr, Flint Community Schools  
Ethan J. Lang, Grand Blanc Community Schools  
Brook Hansen, Linden Community Schools

Ingham County

Amy Dalton, Holt Public Schools  
Jennifer Robel, Holt Public Schools  
Dr. Kevin P. Leonard, Holt Public Schools

Jessie Jones, Holt Public Schools  
Abbie Tykocki, East Lansing Public Schools  
Dr. Terah Chambers, East Lansing Public Schools  
Tali Faris-Hylen, East Lansing Public Schools  
Dr. Kath Edsall, East Lansing Public Schools  
Chris Martin, East Lansing Public Schools  
Dr. Estrella Torrez, East Lansing Public Schools

Ionia County,  
Brian Pohl, Portland Public Schools

Jackson County  
Kesha Hamilton, Jackson Public Schools  
Alaina Sharp, Jackson Public Schools  
Derek Dobies, Jackson Public Schools  
Shalanda Hunt, Jackson Public Schools

Kalamazoo County  
Matt Schreiner, Comstock Public Schools  
Stephanie Willoughby, Vicksburg Community Schools

Kent County  
Amber Z Kilpatrick, Grand Rapids Public Schools  
Sara Melton, Grand Rapids Public Schools  
Eleanor Moreno, Grand Rapids Public Schools  
Aarie Wade, Grand Rapids Public Schools  
José Rodriguez, Grand Rapids Public Schools  
Christopher J. Michaud, Forest Hills Public Schools

Macomb County  
Gina Aiuto, Roseville Community Schools

Mason County  
Alan Neushwander, Ludington School Board

Monroe County  
Dr. Cole Ellsworth, Bedford Public Schools

Oakland County  
Sandra Dukhie, Ferndale Public Schools  
Mark de la Vergne, Ferndale Public Schools  
Jackie Hart, Ferndale Public Schools  
Jonathan Turner, Ferndale Public Schools  
Erin Molnar, Ferndale Public Schools

Lauren Jasinski, Royal Oak Schools  
Deb Anderson, Royal Oak Schools  
Tim Ciechorski, Royal Oak Schools  
Matt Wickey, Royal Oak Schools  
Emily Swan, Lamphere Schools  
ShaQuan Davis-Smith, School District of the City of Pontiac  
Dr. Cheryl Blau, Farmington Public Schools  
Claudia Heinrich, Farmington Public Schools  
Nicole Denson, Southfield Public Schools  
Jillian Holloway, Southfield Public Schools  
April Beaton, Hazel Park Public Schools  
Julie Alspach, Rochester Community Schools

Ottawa County

Tim Marroquín, Holland Public Schools

Washtenaw County

Michael McVey, Saline Area Schools  
Brad Gerbe, Saline Area Schools  
Tom Faro, Milan Area Schools  
Sara Meray, Milan Area Schools  
Gabriel Burdette, Milan Area Schools  
Lauren Smith, Lincoln Consolidated Schools  
Jason D. Moore, Lincoln Consolidated Schools  
Maria Goodrich, Ypsilanti Community Schools  
Talisha Sutton-Kennedy, Ypsilanti Community Schools

Wayne County

Lisa McIntyre, Northville Public Schools  
Ron Frazier, Northville Public Schools  
Melissa Stuart, Northville Public Schools  
Meredith Riggan Maurer, Northville Public Schools  
Korey Morris, Taylor School District  
Anupam Chugh Sidhu, Plymouth Canton Community Schools