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LDF Urges U.S. Department of Education to Reject Harmful Proposed Grant Priorities and Reinstate 2021 Commitments

Today, the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) submitted formal comments to the U.S. Department of Education (ED), expressing strong opposition to two of the agency's three proposed supplemental priorities for federal grantees. LDF urges ED to abandon these proposals and reinstate its 2021 priorities, which more robustly addressed expansion of access, racial equity, investments in public education, and protections for Black students and other historically underserved communities.

LDF cited ED's significant departure from the longstanding goals of the agency, including federal civil rights enforcement, and warns that its proposed priorities undermine the rights of all students to access high-quality education. In particular, LDF outlines concerns with the following priorities:

1. Priority #2, "Expanding School Choice" attempts to expand school privatization and defund this nation's public education system. ED's focus on expanding private school voucher programs threatens to deepen racial segregation, strip funding from public schools, and undermine student outcomes and transparency.
2. Priority #3 "Returning Education to the States" seeks to abdicate the federal government's critical role in supporting vital funding and ensuring states comply with civil rights laws. ED's focus on destabilizing or eliminating its central role in public education mischaracterizes the federal government's responsibility to school communities and will have a devastating impact on the country's most vulnerable students, including Black students.

Ray Li, Policy Counsel at LDF issued the following statement alongside the letter:

"The Department's proposed priorities are a flagrant departure from the nation's most foundational principles on education—a significant step away from equity, public accountability, and the legal responsibility of our federal government to protect all students, including Black and other underserved students, from discrimination. Encouraging school privatization under a false guise of 'choice' will deepen racial segregation, drain public resources, and abandon the needs of vulnerable students. Likewise, minimizing the federal government's critical responsibility to ensure civil rights protections for Black students and school communities as a whole when states fall short.

LDF is calling on the Department to abandon these harmful proposals, affirm its role as an enforcer of civil rights, and reinstate the 2021 priorities that reflected a non-partisan, real commitment to advancing equal opportunity in education.”

For LDF’s full comments, read our letter to the Department of Education [here](#).

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Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) is the nation’s first civil rights law organization. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.