



For Immediate Release
Friday, March 21, 2025

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LDF Condemns President Trump’s Executive Order to Dismantle the Department of Education

Yesterday, President Trump issued an Executive Order to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education (ED), instructing Secretary McMahon to facilitate the closure of the federal agency. This action, based on disinformation, comes after the Trump Administration laid off nearly half the agency’s employees [last week](#), and made drastic cuts to the Office for Civil Rights. These acts will undoubtedly have a detrimental effect on millions of students, parents, caregivers, and educators who rely on the Department of Education’s critical support to public schools and institutions of higher education. The EO will also deny these students a critical resource to combat discrimination in these schools and ensure equal access to educational opportunities.

While the President claims the executive order will not impede the provision of services and funding, like those that support low-income students and students with disabilities, any effort to dismantle ED is an affront to their needs and an abdication of the government’s duty to ensure all children have equal access to an education. In addition to calling to dissolve the agency’s functions or transfer them to other agencies, the order erroneously characterizes diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives as forms of illegal discrimination when, in fact, they may be used to prevent or remedy discrimination.

LDF President and Director-Counsel Janai Nelson issued the following statement:

“Tonight, we stand on the brink of a catastrophic failure by the Trump Administration as it continues its brazen assault on the U.S. Department of Education—the agency charged with protecting against discrimination and enforcing civil rights. For decades, the Department of Education has played a pivotal role in upholding the promise of a safe, high-quality, and inclusive education for millions of students—including Black students, LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, girls, and other students of color. Sadly, President Trump’s executive order presents a serious danger in yet another attempt to destroy public education, dial back hard-fought progress and relegate our democracy to one predating *Brown v. Board of Education*.

“Contrary to the claims in the Trump Administration’s executive order, state and local school boards and superintendents already hold the vast majority of power over decisions that most impact students. Make no mistake-- the fabricated justification for abolishing ED is an effort to return power to the states, pretext that harkens back to a period of legalized school segregation where state legislatures and governors, especially in the South, fought to preserve a racial caste system and deny Black students access to equitable school resources and educational opportunities.”

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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.