

THE ALLIANCE TO RECLAIM OUR SCHOOLS

When it Comes to Our Children and Our Schools -- Which Side Are They On?

What to Ask Your Member of Congress about Public Schools and the 2018 Budget

The Trump administration, with Betsy DeVos at the head of the Department of Education, is a grave threat to the promise of quality public education for all children.

In May, President Trump released his proposed Fiscal Year 2018 budget. Trump is proposing over \$9 billion in cuts to the U.S. Department of Education. He proposes eliminating programs that provide after school to low-income students, hire and train teachers, fund anti-bullying initiatives, support additional services for homeless students and more.

In June, the House Appropriations Committee sent *their* proposed budget to the House. While less draconian than the President's budget, the House is also recommending significant cuts to our public schools.

Betsy DeVos has ordered the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) to rescind rules clarifying the civil rights of LGBT students, students with disabilities and students of color. OCR has rescinded guidance around the discriminatory application of out-of-school suspensions. They have rescinded guidance around the right of equal access to charter schools. They have begun closing civil rights claims without reviewing evidence of systemic discrimination.

Betsy DeVos has one mission at the Department of Education: to expand charter schools and lead the establishment of a federal voucher program – a program that would siphon public dollars meant for our public schools, and allow it to pad the pockets and budgets of private schools and private management companies. The most likely path to a federal voucher program is the upcoming reform of the federal tax code.

The Trump/DeVos agenda must be stopped.

We are calling on parents, educators, students and community members to speak to your members of Congress to let them know that we will not accept funding cuts at our public schools. We will not accept the Trump/DeVos voucher agenda. We will not accept the dismantling of civil rights protections for any children, whether they are Black or Brown, Christian, Jewish or Muslim, LGBT, special needs or immigrants.

Here are some questions to ask:

- The budgets we have seen from the President and the House are expected to cut billions from education programs that support low income children and their families. The President's budget cuts almost \$2 billion from after school programs, \$7 million from supports for homeless children and \$1 billion from schools with large percentages of low-income students. *Which side are you on?* Will you oppose *any* cuts to these programs? Or do you support President Trump's education agenda?
- We live in a time when racial divisions are stark. This is true in our public schools as well. Walk in to a school with a majority of Black or Brown students: you will see metal detectors. You will see armed police officers. You will see rigid, compliance-based behavior codes. You won't see many guidance counselors. You won't see many options in the curriculum like World Languages or advanced sciences. More affluent communities would NEVER stand for these conditions. You know that, and we know that. We are criminalizing our Black and Brown children. President Trump's budget eliminates funding for anti-bullying programs, money to train teachers to use restorative practices and funding for school climate initiatives. Students and community groups in dozens of districts have been fighting hard to eliminate the School-to-Prison Pipeline. *Which*

side are you on? Will you champion the dismantling of the school to prison pipeline and vote against these cuts? Or do you stand with Mr. Trump, who says these programs are unnecessary?

- The President’s budget cuts \$2 billion from teacher training and class size programming. If this budget is passed, thousands of teachers will be facing larger class sizes – which makes effective teaching difficult. We can’t afford to raise class sizes across the country. Will you oppose any budget that eliminates or significantly cuts funds for teachers, and teacher training?
- Education Secretary Betsy DeVos promotes policies that would severely weaken our public schools. She talks about “school choice” as if vouchers are *the mission* of the Department of Education. The Department of Education is supposed to ensure that *all* students have the educational resources they deserve. Vouchers are an unproven strategy that diverts money we desperately need in our public schools. *Which side are you on?* Do you stand with Betsy DeVos, or will you vote against ANY federal voucher or tax credit voucher proposal that is brought before the U.S. House/Senate?
- The Federal Charter Schools Program is the largest source of funding for new charter schools in the country. The grants have helped open or expand thousands of new charter schools without *any* local invitation, without accountability for how and where the money is spent. The Department of Education’s own Inspector General has issued two critical audits of the program finding lax oversight and little transparency. Yet Mr. Trump and the House of Representatives are moving forward with budgets that would dramatically increase funding for this program. *Which side are you on?* Will you join us in opposing new funding for the federal Charter Schools Program?