

November 14, 2019

Kenneth L. Marcus
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, DC 20202

RE: Request for Comments on Proposed Mandatory Civil Rights Data Collection (Docket ID Number ED-2019-ICCD-0119)

Dear Assistant Secretary Marcus:

On behalf of National PTA and our three million PTA members, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the U.S. Department of Education's proposed changes to the 2019-20 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) conducted by the Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR). National PTA is committed to the protection of students' civil rights as we believe all students have the right to attend school in a safe and inclusive environment free from discrimination. The CRDC is a longstanding element of the overall enforcement and monitoring strategy used by OCR to ensure that recipients of the Department's federal financial assistance do not discriminate on the bases of race, color, national origin, sex, and disability.¹ By providing actionable data that helps parents, educators, researchers and advocates examine systemic civil rights violations, the CRDC plays a crucial role ensuring a more equitable education system.²

We are gravely concerned by the proposed changes to data collection on preschool enrollment counts and suspension, early childhood programs and school spending. These proposed changes will diminish OCR's ability to investigate complaints alleging discrimination and enforce Federal civil rights laws while also limiting stakeholder access to robust national data. We urge the Department to withdraw the proposed changes in the aforementioned areas.

The proposal to stop collecting preschool enrollment and suspension data disaggregated by demographic subgroups is deeply concerning. This data is crucial to determining whether exclusionary discipline continues to fall more harshly on particular populations of students. For example, research shows that male preschool students from minority populations are

¹OCR, Mandatory Civil Rights Data Collection Data Set for School Year 2019–20: Supporting Statement, Part A: Justification (Sept. 2019), <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=ED-2019-ICCD-0119-0002>.

² Ary Amerikaner, *Why We Need to Protect the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) from Secretary DeVos' Proposed Cuts*, 2019, <https://edtrust.org/the-equity-line/why-we-need-to-protect-the-civil-rights-data-collection-crdc-from-secretary-devos-proposed-cuts/>

suspended and expelled at disproportionately high rates.³ Absent continued collection of preschool enrollment and suspension data disaggregated by demographic subgroup, disparities in discipline may continue or become exacerbated.

The proposed changes to data collection on early childhood programs are also concerning. Early childhood education is more racially segregated than any other school level.⁴ OCR must continue to collect robust early childhood education data so stakeholders can measure progress in ensuring that all children benefit from quality early childhood settings.

Finally, we are concerned that the proposed changes to school spending data collected by CRDC will make it more difficult to identify, explain and address funding inequities among school systems. While higher funding for schools is associated with better outcomes for students,⁵ education funding disparities continue to exist. CRDC data collection on school spending can assist stakeholders in determining why these funding disparities exist.

National PTA recognizes the importance of the CRDC data collection to parents, educators, researchers and advocates in their efforts to better understand systemic civil rights violations in our nation's schools. Limiting data collection on preschool enrollment counts and suspension, early childhood programs and school spending data could potentially lead to an expansion of discriminatory and hostile environments and difficulty properly understanding why certain inequities continue to exist. We urge the Department to withdraw the proposed changes and instead implement changes that strengthen data collection and help protect the civil rights of all students. Please contact Eileen Huck, Senior Manager of Government Affairs, at ehuck@pta.org or (703) 518-1225 to answer any questions or provide further input as needed.

Sincerely,



Leslie Carrell Boggs
President
National PTA



Nathan R. Monell, CAE
Executive Director
National PTA

³ Institute for Child Success, Preschool Suspension and Expulsion: Defining the Issues, at 3 (Dec. 2018), <https://www.instituteforchildsuccess.org/themencodepdf%20viewer/?file=https://www.instituteforchildsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/ICS-2018-PreschoolSuspensionBrief-WEB.pdf>

⁴ Urban Institute, Segregated from the Start: Comparing Segregation in Early Childhood and K-12 Education (Oct. 1, 2019), <https://www.urban.org/features/segregated-start>.

⁵ Linda Darling-Hammond, Learning Policy Institute, Investing in Student Success: Lessons from State School Finance Reforms 6-7 (Apr. 2019), https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Investing_Student_Success_REPORT.pdf