

November 1, 2018

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

As presidents and chancellors of leading American research universities, we write to express our deep concern and dismay at reports of possible withdrawal of federal agency protections for transgender people. We appeal to you to do everything you can to prevent such action and to uphold the dignity of all persons.

According to the reports, the Department of Health and Human Services is proposing to define sex under Title IX as either male or female, unchangeable, and determined by a person's genitals at birth. Such a narrow and binary definition would have the effect of rolling back important protections against discrimination on the basis of gender and gender identity.

These protections are important because transgender Americans in all parts of the country, including students and others on our campuses, have faced discrimination, isolation, and harassment. Providing these protections is fully consistent with basic principles of fairness and respect for others, and it is also fully consistent with the guidance of the American medical community regarding the distinctions between sex, gender, and gender identity. The American Medical Association has specifically called for legal protections ensuring access to basic human services and public facilities for transgender people.

You have observed that the Department of Education has "a responsibility to protect every student in America and ensure that they have the freedom to learn and thrive in a safe and trusted environment. This is not merely a federal mandate, but a moral obligation no individual, school, district, or state can abdicate." We agree. We have been steadfast in our efforts to ensure that our campuses are welcoming and supportive for all students, including transgender students, faculty, and staff, and it is critical that the federal government also remain steadfast in providing these protections for all students as well.

Much work has been done in recent years to understand and reduce the challenges and ordeals experienced by transgender people. This is no time for the country to turn its back on

these valued members of our communities. We hope you will provide needed leadership in opposing the proposed change, and that you will strongly advocate for an interpretation of Title IX (and other federal laws) that fully protects the rights of transgender people—an interpretation grounded in the law, medical judgment, compassion, and a firm commitment to respect the dignity of all Americans.

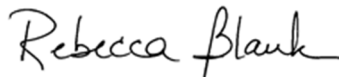
With very best wishes,



Robert L. Barchi

President

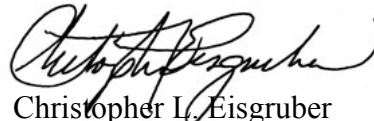
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey



Rebecca Blank

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