



December 21, 2018

Besty DeVos

United States Secretary of Education
Chair, Federal Commission on School Safety
400 Maryland Ave, SW
Washington D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos,

As the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Racial Equity Anchor Group, we write to express our profound opposition to the recommendations of the Federal Commission on School Safety.

The Racial Equity Anchor Group is a collaborative of nine leading national organizations supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Together we work to promote racial equity, advance racial healing and ensure that all children, families and communities have opportunities to reach their full potential. Members of the Racial Equity Anchor Group include: Advancement Project’s national office, the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, Demos, Faith In Action, NAACP, National Congress of American Indians, National Urban League, Race Forward, and UnidosUS.

Decades of research on school climate has consistently shown that safe schools are well-resourced and invest in the supports students need to thrive in and beyond the classroom. Supports like school guidance counselors, psychiatrists and high-quality teachers help create positive school climates and help address the root cause of violence.

The recommendation to rescind the Obama-era school discipline guidance is a misguided attempt to link the Parkland tragedy to efforts to prevent the discriminatory treatment of youth of color. There is no evidence that the Guidance has made schools less safe. Districts across the country have seen success in implementing alternatives to punitive and exclusionary discipline, like restorative justice practices, that reduce suspensions and expulsions and resolve conflicts among students.

For the nation's schools to be truly safe, we must ensure that we protect the civil rights of students of color and resist the urge to pursue strategies that harden schools, create hostile school climates and calcify the school-to-prison pipeline. We urge the U.S. Department of Education to divest from school policing and measures that harden schools, invest in programs supporting restorative practices and advance initiatives that promote racial equity in our nation's public schools.

Signed,

Advancement Project national office
Asian Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Demos
Faith in Action
National Congress of American Indians
NAACP
National Urban League
Race Forward
UnidosUS