



October 9, 2026

René L. Rocque
Acting Inspector General
Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Acting Inspector General Rocque:

As Members of the Democratic Women's Caucus and House Democratic Caucus, we write with extreme alarm regarding the safety of students, particularly women on college campuses, across the country and the Department of Education's (the Department) failure to adequately enforce Title IX protections for student survivors. We urge the Office of Inspector General to immediately open an investigation into the Department's failure to adequately enforce Title IX protections for survivors of sexual harassment and assault, including whether changes in staffing, resources, case-processing, and enforcement priorities have undermined the Department's ability to protect students, investigate complaints in a timely manner, and hold institutions accountable.

Jane Doe's story from Cornell University has drawn national attention not only because of the deeply disturbing conduct and questions surrounding the institutional response, but because her story is one that too many women in America can relate to. An estimated 1 in 4 undergraduate women experience sexual assault or rape during their time in college, and in recent years there has been an increase of reports of nonconsensual sexual encounters on campuses.¹ Other student populations, including transgender and nonbinary students and women of color, also experience disproportionately high rates of sexual violence.² Despite this high prevalence, survivors continue to report barriers to obtaining meaningful institutional and federal accountability.³ This

1 Charalambous, P., & Hutchinson, B. (2026, September 30). *35% of Cornell undergraduate women reported having been sexually assaulted: Survey*. ABC News. <https://abcnews.com/US/35-cornell-undergraduate-women-reported-sexually-assaulted-survey/story?id=136849509>

2 Cantalupo, N. C. (2018, April 25). *And even more of us are brave: Intersectionality & sexual harassment of women students of color* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 3168909). Social Science Research Network. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3168909

3 Nesbitt, S., & Carson, S. (2021). *The cost of reporting: Perpetrator retaliation, institutional betrayal, and student survivor pushout*. Know Your IX; Advocates for Youth. <https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Know-Your-IX-2021-Cost-of-Reporting.pdf>

case, in addition to being relatable for many women, has renewed scrutiny of how colleges and universities respond when students report sexual violence and therefore what federal regulation requires of institutions through Title IX.⁴

In Jane Doe's case, public reporting has raised questions about the Title IX process and discipline imposed by Cornell University and whether relevant information was transmitted to local prosecutors.⁵ In Kendall Danielle Francis' case at Louisiana State University, public reporting stated that the university found a student athlete responsible under its Title IX processes—imposing probation while allowing him to remain on campus and continue playing football.⁶ These cases underscore broader concerns: first, that there is a sexual violence public health crisis on college campuses, and second, that despite student survivors following established reporting and institutional processes, there is often no meaningful accountability or protection.

Those concerns are especially urgent given the current condition of the Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) which is meant to oversee these processes. As of January 2025, OCR reportedly faced a backlog of nearly 12,000 civil rights cases—this includes sexual harassment and assault cases under Title IX.⁷ Reports analyzing publicly available OCR data have identified that zero resolution agreements pertaining to sexual harassment or assault on college campuses have been reached since January of 2025 despite complaints remaining pending.⁸ The Department subsequently reduced OCR's workforce by nearly half and closed seven of its 12 regional offices.⁹ At the same time that OCR's staff and regional capacity were substantially reduced, the Department announced and pursued Title IX enforcement priorities concerning transgender students' participation in athletics and access to sex-separated facilities, and also dismantling Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs.¹⁰ These reprioritizations do nothing to address the backlog of sexual violence cases. Additionally, The Administration has

4 Kamin, D., Flegenheimer, M., Harris, A. J., & Otterman, S. (2026, October 1). *Cornell rape accusation reporting*. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/10/01/nyregion/cornell-rape-accusation-reporting.html>

5 Saeidi, M. (2026, September 30). *DA in Cornell University case says he never saw transcript of campus police interview with alleged rape victim*. *CBS News New York*. <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/cornell-university-rape-case-district-attorney-campus-police-interview/>

6 Siemaszko, C. (2026). *LSU student says she was raped-by football player who is still on team*. *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/lsu-student-says-was-raped-football-player-still-team-rcna600539>

7 Sanders, Bernard. (2026, April 28). *Justice Denied: How Trump's Office for Civil Rights Reached a 12-Year Low in Protecting Students from Discrimination*. [04.24.26-Justice-Denied-How-Trumps-Office-for-Civil-Rights-Reached-a-12-Year-Low-in-Protecting-Students-from-Discrimination FINAL.pdf](https://www.justice.gov/04.24.26-Justice-Denied-How-Trumps-Office-for-Civil-Rights-Reached-a-12-Year-Low-in-Protecting-Students-from-Discrimination_FINAL.pdf)

8 U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. (n.d.). *Open investigations*. <https://ocras.ed.gov/open-investigations>

9 House Committee on Education and Workforce Democrats. (2025, May 12). *Ranking Member Scott demands ED answer questions regarding status of students' civil rights investigations*. <https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/media/press-releases/ranking-member-scott-demands-ed-answer-questions-regarding-status-of-students-civil-rights-investigations>

further undermined Title IX enforcement by transferring key functions of the OCR to the Department of Justice, despite OCR's longstanding role investigating and resolving complaints of sex discrimination on college campuses. This restructuring threatens to further delay investigations, erode OCR's institutional expertise, and create additional barriers for survivors seeking accountability.¹¹ These reprioritizations, staff reductions, and the interagency agreement raise significant questions about whether OCR has sufficient capacity to investigate Title IX complaints, communicate with complainants, and fulfill its civil rights enforcement responsibilities in a timely and effective manner. Without proper enforcement, Title IX is merely words on a page. The Department is failing student survivors and leaving them to defend themselves in their most vulnerable moments.

Additionally, on September 28, the Department formally reinstated their Title IX rule which only weakens protections and processes for student survivors. This is the same regulation from 2020 which the Department has been operating under since January 2025. The rule narrowed the definition of sexual harassment, reduced school liability, and puts in place intimidating investigative and hearings procedures that are retraumatizing to survivors.¹² The rule has been heavily criticized by advocates for making it easier for schools to ignore sexual harassment and violence, in addition to being based on sexist myths that survivors, especially women and girls, tend to lie about their victimization.¹³

The cases at Cornell University and Louisiana State University have brought renewed attention to whether students who report sexual violence can obtain meaningful protection and accountability through the systems intended to protect them. However, the concerns raised by these cases extend beyond the actions of any one institution. They underscore the need to examine whether the Department's current policies, enforcement priorities, resources, and regulatory framework are collectively undermining its ability to protect students from sexual harassment and violence as required by Title IX. The Department has reduced the federal

10 National Women's Law Center. (2025, April 4). *The Executive Order to Dismantle the Department of Education and the Impact on Gender Justice at School*. <https://nwlc.org/resource/the-executive-order-to-dismantle-the-department-of-education-and-the-impact-on-gender-justice-at-school/>

11 U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Workforce. (2026, July 20). *Letter to Education Secretary Linda McMahon regarding interagency agreements transferring OCR and OSERS functions*. https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/congressional_democrats_letter_to_ed_s_ecmcmahonreocroser1.pdf

12 National Women's Law Center. (2026, October 2). *Amidst the Trump administration reviving anti-survivor regulations, women's rights and gender justice organizations call for action*. <https://nwlc.org/resource/amidst-the-trump-administration-reviving-anti-survivor-regulations-womens-rights-and-gender-justice-organizations-call-for-action/>

13 Gabbatt, A. (2020, May 6). *Betsy DeVos rolls back Obama-era guidance on campus sexual assault*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/may/06/betsy-devos-sexual-assault-title-ix-rules>

enforcement infrastructure responsible for protecting students while reinstating a regulatory framework that advocates warn creates additional barriers for survivors. Taken together, these circumstances demand a comprehensive investigation into whether the Department is fulfilling its responsibility to ensure Title IX provides meaningful protections for students who experience sexual harassment and violence.

Given the severity of these concerns, we call on the Department's Office of Inspector General to immediately open an investigation into the Department's enforcement of Title IX protections for students experiencing sexual harassment and sexual violence. We request that this investigation include but is not limited to:

1. Examining whether the Department has fulfilled its legal and administrative responsibilities to investigate and resolve Title IX complaints in a timely and effective manner.
2. The causes and consequences of the absence of resolution agreements involving college sexual harassment and assault complaints since January 2025.
3. Whether reductions in OCR staffing, the closure of regional offices, or changes in enforcement priorities have contributed to delays, backlogs, or failures to resolve these complaints.
4. Examining whether OCR has sufficient staffing, resources, policies, and procedures to effectively enforce Title IX and protect students from sex discrimination, including sexual harassment and violence.
5. Identifying how survivors have been harmed by these changes.

We further request that the Office of Inspector General answer the following questions:

1. How many Title IX sexual harassment and sexual violence complaints are currently pending before OCR, and how long have they been pending?
2. How have processing times, case closures, investigations, and resolution agreements changed since January 2025?
3. Have staffing reductions or office closures affected OCR's ability to investigate complaints or communicate with survivors?
4. Have Department officials directed, formally or informally, OCR personnel to deprioritize certain categories of Title IX complaints?
5. What safeguards are currently in place to ensure Title IX complaints involving sexual violence receive timely and appropriate review?
6. What corrective actions are necessary to ensure the Department is meeting its obligations to protect students under Title IX?

The safety of students on college campuses should not be a partisan issue and deserves to be a priority. Students who experience sexual harassment or sexual violence should be able to rely on a federal civil rights enforcement system that is adequately staffed, transparent, timely, and committed to providing meaningful accountability. Given the urgency of this situation, we must

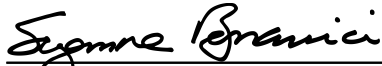
respond resoundingly. We request that the Office of Inspector General report within 60 days of receipt of this letter its findings and recommendations to Congress and identify any immediate steps necessary to restore effective enforcement and accountability.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Maxine Dexter, M.D.
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Teresa Leger Fernández
Chair
Democratic Women's Caucus



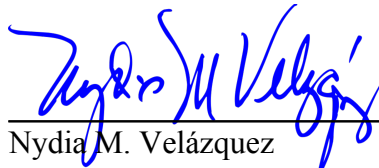
Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Co-Chair
Member Services Task Force
Democratic Women's Caucus



Jasmine Crockett
Co-Chair
Communications Task Force
Democratic Women's Caucus



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Co-Chair
Policy Task Force
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Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



Julie Johnson
Equality Caucus Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus



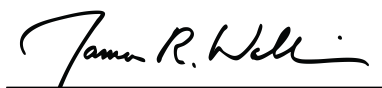
Shontel M. Brown
Co-Chair
Communications Task Force
Democratic Women's Caucus



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



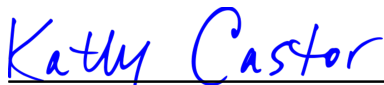
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



James R. Walkinshaw
Member of Congress



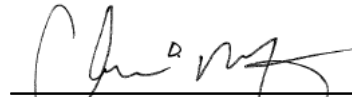
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Christian D. Menefee
Member of Congress



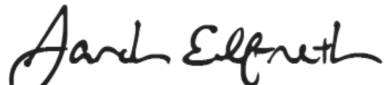
Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



LaMonica McIver
New Member Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



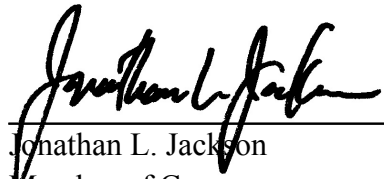
Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress



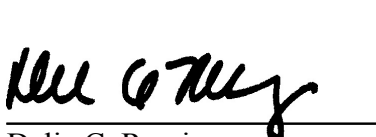
Analilia Mejia
Member of Congress



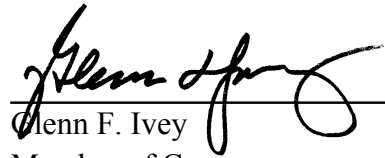
Angie Craig
Member of Congress



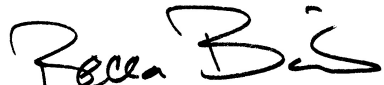
Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



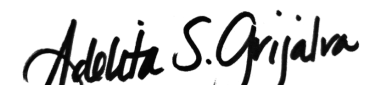
Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



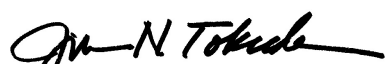
Glenn F. Ivey
Member of Congress



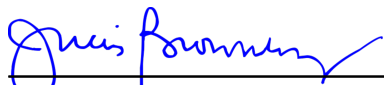
Becca Balint
Member of Congress



Adenita S. Grijalva
Member of Congress



JM Tokuda
Progressive Caucus Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus



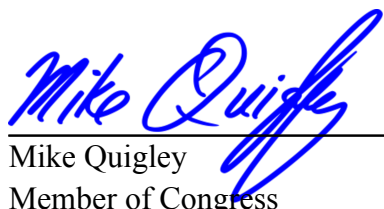
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Nancy Pelosi
Member of Congress



Chrissy Houlahan
Chair
Servicewomen, Women Veterans,
& Military Families Task Force
Democratic Women's Caucus


Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

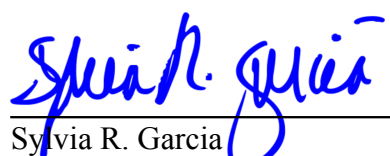

Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

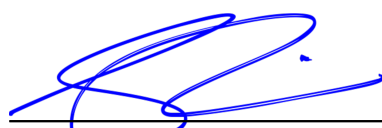

Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

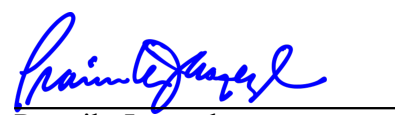

Emily Randall
Whip
Democratic Women's Caucus


Lateefah Simon
Co-Chair
Caregiving Task Force
Democratic Women's Caucus


Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

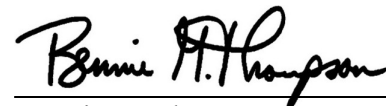

Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

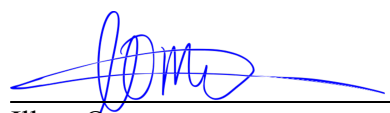

Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress

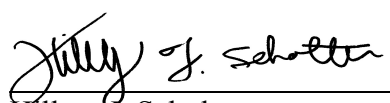

Pramila Jayapal
Congressional Asian Pacific
American Caucus Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus

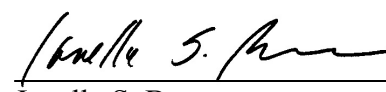

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress


Nikema Williams
Chief Whip
Democratic Women's Caucus


Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress


Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress


Hillary J. Scholten
Vice Chair
Democratic Women's Caucus

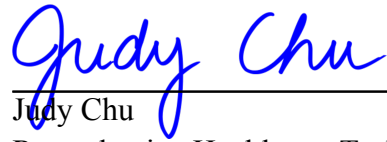

Janelle S. Bynum
Member of Congress



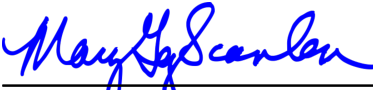
Lois Frankel
Chair Emerita
Democratic Women's Caucus



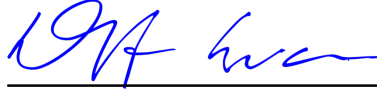
Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Reproductive Healthcare Task
Force Co-Chair & Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus



Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



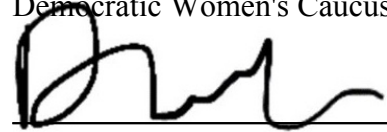
Joyce Beatty
National Leaders & Advocacy
Organizations Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



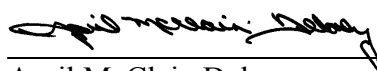
Bill Foster
Member of Congress



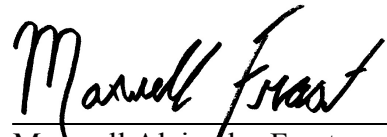
Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



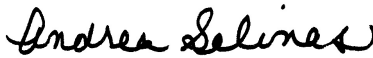
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



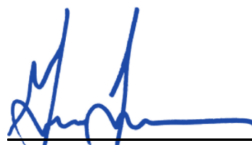
April McClain Delaney
Member of Congress



Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



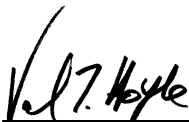
Andrea Salinas
Congressional Hispanic
Caucus Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus



Greg Landsman
Member of Congress



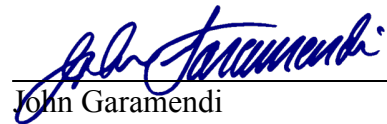
Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



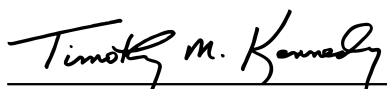
Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Maggie Goodlander
Member of Congress



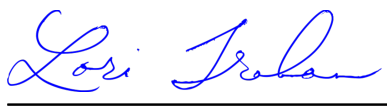
Timothy M. Kennedy
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



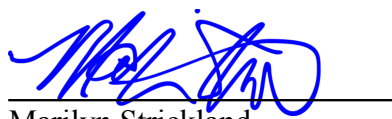
George Latimer
Member of Congress



Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



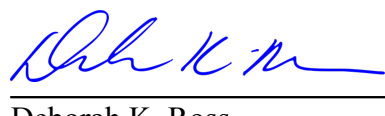
Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



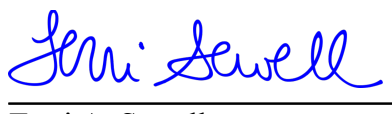
Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress



Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress



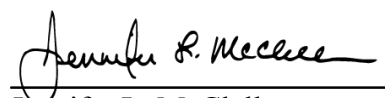
Deborah K. Ross
Co-Chair
Policy Task Force
Democratic Women's Caucus



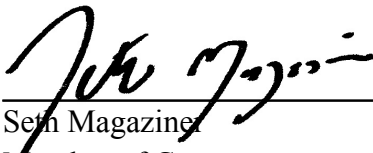
Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress



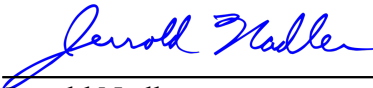
Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress



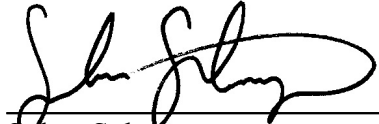
Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



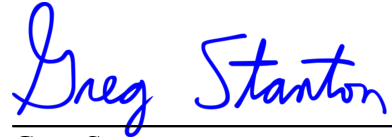
Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



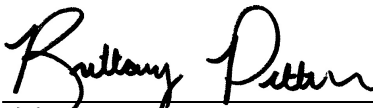
Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



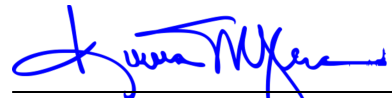
Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



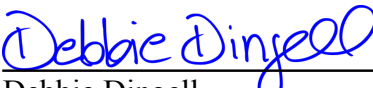
Brittany Petersen
Co-Chair
Caregiving Task Force
Democratic Women's Caucus



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Senate Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus



Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress



Troy A. Carter, Sr.
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Emilia Strong Sykes
Vice Chair
Democratic Women's Caucus



Sarah McBride
Whip
Democratic Women's Caucus