



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SEARAC Strongly Opposes Betsy DeVos for US Secretary of Education

Washington DC - SEARAC strongly opposes the confirmation of billionaire philanthropist Betsy DeVos for Secretary of Education. DeVos's lack of skills, knowledge, and experience make her unqualified, unfit, and undeserving to serve the needs and potential of America's most precious asset: our students.

America's students are more diverse than ever -- students of color, immigrant, and refugee students now comprise the majority of all public school students. Our students deserve a US Secretary of Education who is committed to driving federal policy solutions that ensure all of our diverse students can achieve equitable outcomes. Our students deserve a US Secretary of Education who will champion equity.

DeVos's weak grasp of key federal civil rights education laws, combined with her lack of personal and professional experience in a public school setting as either a public school student, parent of a public school student, teacher, or administrator, render her unfit to serve as US Secretary of Education. Her demonstrated lack of understanding of and commitment to enforcing, across all states, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1975 threatens civil rights protections preventing the neglect and inappropriate treatment of our most vulnerable students. Her inability to respond meaningfully to basic questions during her confirmation hearing on topics that have been discussed for years, such as accountability measures and guns in schools, shows a lack of respect and preparedness for the complexity of the job she wants to assume.

Her only experience with public education has been to worsen inequity by growing charter schools and expanding voucher programs for students who already have the most advantages. DeVos's fixation on growing charter schools and voucher programs *without demanding equal accountability for them* is a short-sighted, one-size-fits-all solution that will not work for all students in America. It will not work for our refugee and immigrant students and families who continue to be denied appropriate language instruction and services in charter schools. It will not work for our families who have difficulty navigating a traditional public school setting, much less the complexities of various charter school systems.

America's students deserve a leader whose life's work demonstrates a commitment to serving all students, especially the most vulnerable. Our students deserve a leader who will expand enforcement of federal civil rights that protect students of color, immigrant students, LGBTQIA students, and students with disabilities and help them access a quality education in every school, in every state.

As a community of refugees who were denied access to education in our war-torn countries, we hold public education close to our hearts as key to protecting and fighting for freedom. Our communities will not endorse a leader uncommitted to ensuring accountability in all of our schools and for all of our students.

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