

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 7, 2025

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave SW
Washington, DC 20202

The Honorable Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Secretary McMahon and Director Vought,

We are writing to raise concerns about capacity, timelines, and follow-through at the Department of Education. The Department has gone forward with another round of layoffs during the shutdown. According to the Department's four-page contingency plan, the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) continues to manage student loan servicing, Pell Grants, and FAFSA processing.¹ Other key offices, however, have not been as fortunate.

The Department has seen deep staff cuts across several offices, including the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE).² OPE plays a central role in administering federal higher education programs, from managing grants that support student access and institutional aid to overseeing accreditation, financial responsibility, and policy implementation.

Our Committee recently sent a letter to the Office of Management and Budget outlining concerns about staffing losses across the Department, including in civil rights, K-12, and special education offices.³ This letter follows up specifically on OPE, which is now operating with limited capacity. Those cuts are already being felt by students, borrowers, and colleges.⁴

At the same time, the Department has started negotiating rulemaking to implement the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA Act).⁵ The Reimagining and Improving Student Education (RISE) Committee is working through new repayment rules, loan caps, and phaseouts that affect tens of millions of borrowers. The committee met with limited public input at the close of each day and without a dedicated civil rights voice at the table.⁶ The Department has said it plans to publish proposed rules later this year and move quickly.⁷ That work will require adequate staff, clear guidance, and reliable operations, not just at FSA, as well as clear communication with borrowers and institutions.

Taken together, these developments raise questions about the Department's capacity to meet its Congressionally-mandated responsibilities. Who is handling grants, rulemaking, and stakeholder engagement at OPE? Who is staffing the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) and its compliance reviews? Who is processing borrower cases at FSA while new repayment rules are being written? If the Department intends to meet its legal duties on time, Congress needs to see the plan and staffing behind it.

¹ <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/us-department-of-education-contingency-plan-lapse-fiscal-year-fy-2026-appropriations-508-112431.pdf>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/14/us/politics/trump-education-department-federal-layoffs.html>

³ https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/house_democrats_letter_to_vought_re_rifs.pdf

⁴ <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/student-aid-policy/2025/10/15/trumps-latest-layoffs-gut-office-postsecondary-ed>

⁵ <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-announces-immediate-implementation-of-higher-education-provisions-one-big-beautiful-bill-act>

⁶ <https://ticas.org/accountability/rise-neg-reg-session-1-recap-oct-2025/>

⁷ <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/quick-takes/2025/07/25/education-dept-prepares-big-beautiful-bill-changes>

Congress expects the Department to succeed at the fundamentals when it comes to programs authorized in the *Higher Education Act of 1965*. Keep aid flowing. Meet civil rights and special education obligations. To do that, we need answers on staffing, schedules, and risk.

Please provide written responses to the questions below and brief our staff by Friday, November 14th, 2025.

Staffing, Contingency Operations, and Basic Capacity

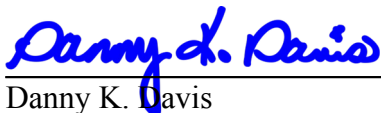
1. As of the date of this letter, how many employees are currently on board, furloughed, or have received RIF notices in 2025? Please provide totals only for higher-education-related offices, including the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE), the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA), and any other postsecondary units within the Department.
2. For OPE, list each division or group that lost staff in 2025, the positions eliminated, and the current headcount by team. Include Institutional Service, Student Service, Policy, Planning, and Innovation, and any boards or programs such as the HBCU Capital Financing Program Unit.
3. Confirm in writing whether any FSA employees have received RIF notices during this or prior rounds of layoffs. If none have, please state that explicitly.
4. Provide an updated version of the Department's shutdown contingency plan as it pertains to OPE and FSA. Identify all excepted activities, any work that has stopped, and any employees designated as essential or protected from RIF action under a court order.

The public needs clear timelines and honest assessments, not surprises. Please provide the requested documents and data, and schedule a briefing with our staff by Friday, November 14th, 2025.

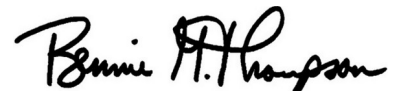
Sincerely,



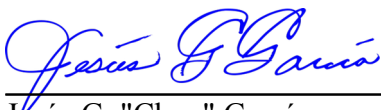
Alma S. Adams
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Subcommittee
on Higher Education and
Workforce Development



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



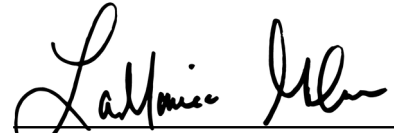
John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



LaMonica McIver
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



Deborah K. Ross
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



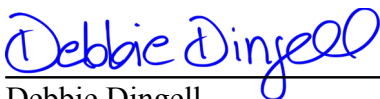
Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



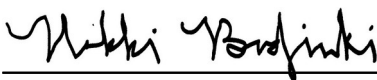
Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



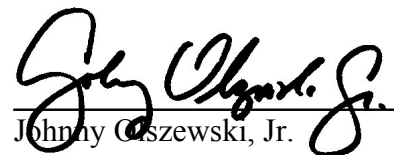
Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



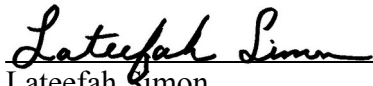
Dina Titus
Member of Congress



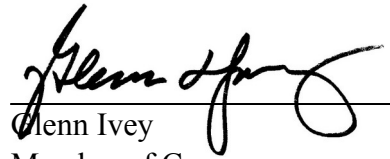
Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress



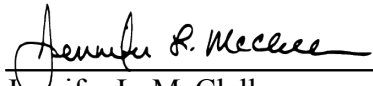
Johnny Oszewski, Jr.
Member of Congress

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Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Glenn Ivey", written over a horizontal line.

Glenn Ivey
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jennifer L. McClellan", written over a horizontal line.

Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress