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Parents of transgender students criticize DeVos

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The parents of more than 700 transgender students nationwide are accusing U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos of abandoning their children after the Trump administration rescinded restroom guidance designed to protect them from discrimination at school.

In a letter signed by families from 47 states and the District of Columbia, the parents note that nearly half of students who identify themselves as "transgender, non-binary, or otherwise non-cisgender" now say they never use school restrooms. Of those, 90% say they're "personally restricted" from using facilities that align with their gender identity, according to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), an LGBTQ civil rights group.

The Trump administration last February rescinded Obama-era protections for transgender students that let them use restrooms that correspond to their gender identity.

In the letter, HRC says transgender students "need full support from our federal government — particularly the agencies tasked with protecting youth from discrimination." These students, the group says, "are put at daily physical, emotional, and psychological risk when they are offered no recourse for discriminatory actions taken by educators, administrators, school staff, and peers."

The letter notes that the Trump administration last year [rescinded guidance](#) making transgender students' protection explicit under federal Title IX law.

The group notes that complaints to the U.S. Education Department's Office of Civil Rights have dropped by 40% since President Trump took office in January 2017, even as people who display "hateful and transphobic views" continue to work in schools nationwide.

These workers, HRC says, "are enabled now more than ever before by the poor example set by the federal government with regard to acceptance and support for all youth."

DeVos did not respond immediately to the letter, which was being released Wednesday.

The new letter comes as the Trump administration shrinks the Education Department in general and the Office for Civil Rights specifically.

Last December, it offered voluntary buyouts to 45 employees in the civil rights office, more than in any other department. Overall, it offered buyouts to 207 employees, *The Wall Street Journal* reported, with nearly one in five from the civil rights office. Education Department

spokeswoman Liz Hill said that reflected the fact that the office is the agency's largest, with about one-eighth of its total staff.

The transgender issue actually [divided the administration](#) last year, placing DeVos briefly at odds with Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who supported changes to federal guidance. DeVos said she was uncomfortable lifting the protections, but ultimately agreed to it.

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