



February 28, 2017

Dear Secretary DeVos,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the value of the Department's Civil Rights Data Collection. As a data-based advocacy organization dedicated to improving child well-being for all of Colorado's 1.2 million children, I am writing on behalf of the Colorado Children's Campaign to encourage you to preserve and expand the collection of these critical data. Since the collection began in 1968, the civil rights and education communities have relied on the CRDC data to understand how our nation can better ensure equitable education opportunities for all children, whether they are African-American, Latino, American Indian, Asian or white. We believe it is vitally important that we preserve the scope, frequency and public accessibility of the information so as to support the Department of Education's work, and the work of others, in ensuring equal educational opportunity and compliance with federal law.

As an organization that relies on data to shape our policy priorities, we have used the CRDC data to inform our legislative work on reducing the use of suspensions and expulsions in the early grades – a time when children most need to be in nurturing, stimulating environments. Additionally, CRDC data have been invaluable in helping us identify gaps in students' access to resources that help ensure they are ready for college or career, including advanced coursework, experienced teachers and school guidance counselors. We must preserve these data on all schools, in addition to data on school climate (e.g., exclusionary discipline, seclusion and restraint, bullying and harassment, corporal punishment, chronic absenteeism), college and career readiness (e.g., enrollment in preschool, AP courses, gifted and talented programs) and staffing and finance (e.g., teacher experience and per-pupil expenditures). For many of these topics, the CRDC is the only source of school-level data. Without it, parents, students and advocates will be left without critical information on schools in their communities.

We need data that help us identify encouraging and troublesome trends as soon as possible so that we may lift up and replicate positive examples and intervene to address conditions that threaten students' opportunities to learn. In recent years, the availability of user-friendly data has allowed students, parents and advocates to see data regarding their own schools as well as schools attended by others. In a state that allows school choice, CRDC data help ensure that Colorado parents can access vital information that will help them choose a school best equipped to support their child's learning.

Any change to limit the scope, frequency or public accessibility of the civil rights data collection would certainly hamper the ability of the department to fulfill its legal obligations and would undermine our shared interest in the best education for every child. Please commit to maintaining and expanding the CRDC.

Sincerely,

Leslie Colwell, Vice President of K-12 Education Initiatives
Colorado Children's Campaign