



Dear Secretary McMahon,

On behalf of the AACTE (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education) representing over 500 institutions dedicated to preparing tomorrow's educators, we write to convey our strong objection to the recent staffing reductions within the United States Department of Education, including the recent layoffs of 466 staff within the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, the Office for Civil Rights, the Office of Postsecondary Education and the Office of Communication and Outreach. These actions jeopardize the capacity of the federal government to support, monitor, and strengthen special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a federal law that ensures millions of students with disabilities get a free, appropriate public education.

The consequences of such reductions extend far beyond internal agency operations — they pose serious risks to students with disabilities, families, and the institutions that prepare special education professionals. We respectfully urge you to consider the following:

1. **Immediate staffing restoration.** The integrity and effectiveness of education programs rely on sufficient staffing to provide technical assistance, monitor state compliance, administer discretionary grants, support research, and ensure accountability.
2. **Protection of core oversight and compliance functions.** Even amid broader reorganization efforts, the Department must safeguard its statutory responsibilities so that reductions do not compromise the federal role in ensuring equity and access for students with disabilities, low-income students, and others who rely on federal programs for vital services.
3. **Reaffirm support for educator preparation.** A meaningful partnership with higher education is vital. AACTE stands ready to assist with educator preparation, program evaluation, and capacity-building — especially in special education. These staffing cuts undermine the federal higher education nexus, which is critical to addressing the national shortage of qualified educators.
4. **Commitment to transparency and stakeholder input.** Any restructuring or budget shifts that affect special education functions should be made with robust stakeholder consultation, clear planning, and assurances that students will not lose essential supports.

As Secretary of Education, you hold a pivotal role in shaping how the Department evolves. Given your stated goals of streamlining bureaucracy, we urge that efficiency be pursued without damaging the Department's ability to fulfill its civil rights and statutory obligations. The stakes are high: weak oversight, under-resourced programs, or gaps in technical assistance could disproportionately harm students with disabilities, particularly in underserved communities. AACTE is prepared to collaborate with you, your staff, Congress, and other stakeholders to ensure that cuts do not undermine access, inclusion, or educational quality.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent issue. We look forward to working with you to protect and strengthen education in this time of transition.

Sincerely,

Anne Tapp Jaksa, Ph.D.

Chair, Board of Directors, AACTE
Professor, Saginaw Valley State University

Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy, Ph.D.

President and CEO, AACTE



Tel: (202) 293-2450

Fax: (202) 457-8095



www.aacte.org

aacte@aacete.org