



Advocacy Update

Sent: November 29, 2018

HELP PROTECT SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS

November 16th the U.S. Department of Education issued a formal statement on the newly proposed Title IX ruling, under the Education Amendments of 1972, clarifying the obligation of academic institutions to respond to reports of sexual harassment and violence. Rather than offering greater transparency for survivors, the Department's new ruling offers broader protections for those who have been accused of sexual misconduct.

In October 2017 WRJ issued an [open letter](#) to Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos expressing our continued support for robust enforcement of Title IX guidance set forth in 2011 and our dismay at the decision to roll back protections for transgender and gender-nonconforming students. Attached to that letter were more [than 650 signatures](#) from women worldwide who joined WRJ in expressing concern about the erosion of these Title IX protections, along with many additional comments regarding the dangerous repercussions of the revised rule.

Under the new proposal, fewer allegations would be considered sexual harassment and schools would be responsible only for investigating incidents that took place at campus programs and activities and that were reported directly to a school dean. This excludes off-campus sexual harassment and harassment that is reported through other channels. The Department of Education believes this will save \$328-409 million over the next 10 years.

WRJ is outraged that the new proposed law not only favors the accused, but also exacerbates sexual violence by allowing schools to do less in response and making it more difficult for survivors to come forward. 1 in 5 women, 1 in 4 transgender or gender non-conforming students, and 1 in 18 men are sexually assaulted during their time in college, according to the [Campus Climate Survey](#), and nearly 98% of girls ages 14-18 do not report their assaults to the police or school authorities. If schools are permitted to ignore allegations of sexual harassment and violence, these numbers are likely to increase. Title IX was created to protect students on the basis of sex. The proposed change would provide more protections to the accused, rather than the sexual assault survivor.

Consistent with our [recent resolution](#) on sexual violence in schools and our longstanding commitment to the safety of students, WRJ urges you to express your strong opposition to this highly harmful proposed law.

TAKE ACTION NOW

From now until January 28th, the Department of Education is accepting comments on this proposed rule from the public. The comment period will last 60 days. Please [submit a comment](#) to make your voice heard.

- When drafting your comment, please include your personal feelings and connection to this case. Why are protections for sexual assault survivors important to you? Below is sample text that you may use as the basis for your comment, but we strongly



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encourage you to personalize it. If there are multiple identical comments, they are not counted individually for Department consideration. All comments will be made available to the public so do not include personal details such as your address or contact information in your comment text.

- Once your comment is completed, submit it to the Federal Register. You will then be prompted to fill out a required contact form. Once you complete the form, press “continue” to review your information, and then press “submit comment” at the bottom right corner of the page.
- Let us know that you submitted a comment by filling out this [form](#)! **We want you to be counted in WRJ’s efforts to protect sexual assault survivors.**

Sample Comment:

Dear Secretary DeVos,

As a concerned citizen, Reform Jew, and woman, I am writing you today to express my strongest opposition to the proposed rule “Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance” (RIN 1870-AA14). 1 in 5 women, 1 in 4 transgender or gender non-conforming students, and 1 in 18 men are sexually assaulted during their time in college. If this proposed rule goes into effect, it will be even more difficult for survivors to report their assaults. Our Jewish tradition emphasizes the sanctity of human life as a core principle of our value system and therefore imposes a moral duty to prevent violence if at all possible. Allowing this proposed rule to be put into place would be going against that sacred duty.

I am writing today to stand up for my children, students, and fellow human beings, and to demand the same standards of transparency for both survivors and the accused in the reporting process. The proposed rule gives special rights to alleged perpetrators while encouraging schools to disbelieve or dismiss survivors when they report violence. I urge you to withdraw this proposed rule and reimplement the 2011 guidance, which is more likely to provide sexual assault survivors the justice they deserve.

[Comment Now.](#)