



October 9, 2017

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos,

Representing progressive Jewish women worldwide, we, the Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ), write you today to express our continued support for Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Dear Colleague Letter of 2011 that clarified the obligation of academic institutions to effectively and promptly respond to reports of sexual harassment and violence, an obligation that is essential to protecting students. 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. We believe that continuing the protections of the existing sexual violence guidance fulfills this duty.

Because sexual violence perpetuates inequality and thus constitutes sex discrimination, Title IX imposes a legal obligation on universities and K-12 schools in the United States to respond to reports of sexual violence. The obligation to respond to reports of sexual violence is crucial as the Department of Justice reports that 20 percent of women undergraduates and one in 16 undergraduate men are the victims of completed or attempted acts of sexual violence while in college.

Consistent with our longstanding commitment to protecting the rights and wellbeing of young people, particularly those who are vulnerable and at risk of sexual violence, in June of 2017, WRJ issued a statement [addressing sexual violence in schools](#), affirming our support of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and of the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter.

Your recent roundtable discussions questioning whether the existing guidance should remain in place, the administration's recent decision to roll back Title IX guidance protecting transgender and gender-nonconforming students, and the release of new and less restrictive interim guidance on September 22nd send alarming signals of a potential erosion, or revocation, of existing sexual violence guidance.

Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ) strengthens the voice of women worldwide and empowers them to create caring communities, nurture congregations, cultivate personal and spiritual growth, and advocate for and promote progressive Jewish values.

633 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017-6778 · P: 212.650.4050 · F: 212.650.4059
Toll-free: 866.WRJ.5924 · Email: info@wrj.org · Website: www.wrj.org



We urge you to maintain and enforce the current Title IX guidance as it pertains to sexual violence. The Department of Education is responsible under Title IX for protecting students and providing safe educational environments that are free of discrimination, harassment, and violence. The safety of all students should remain our highest concern.

Sincerely,

Women of Reform Judaism

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