January 8, 2021

Linda Darling-Hammond, Director of the Biden-Harris Education Transition Team and the Transition Team

Dear Dr. Darling-Hammond and the Department of Education Transition Team,

The undersigned organizations, all of whom support greatly increased attention to educational equity, recommend that the Biden-Harris Department of Education (ED) prioritize establishing an Office for Gender Equity reporting to the Secretary of Education as soon as possible. This Office is the first priority in a longer letter sent to the transition teams by the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education.

Creation of an Office for Gender Equity is critical in restoring and ensuring opportunity, safety, and gender equity in education particularly as the Department of Education rectifies the 2020 changes to the Title IX Regulations and withdrawal of important Guidance documents by the Trump Administration and as it advances initiatives to ensure educational opportunity for all. The Office for Gender Equity is immediately needed to obtain public input on revising the Title IX regulations relating to sexual harassment and assault and other rescinded guidance on transgender individuals and Title IX Coordinators. It is also crucial that the new Biden-Harris Department of Education show proactive gender equity leadership to help establish an effective national infrastructure of Title IX Coordinators and other gender equity experts to implement full eradication of long-standing sex discrimination with attention to compounded discrimination based on race, disability, English Language Learners, immigration, pregnancy/parenting, and LGBTQ status in education. An Office for Gender Equity is also needed to coordinate policy and make high quality gender equity resources including research, policies, training, and student materials available to the public by re-establishing a Gender Equity Web-based Resource Center to serve all levels from pre-K to higher and adult education.

We recommend that the Department create the Office for Gender Equity administratively, with its Director reporting to the Secretary of Education. This office is also proposed in the Gender Equity Education Act (GEEA), and a Special Assistant for Gender Equity was authorized in the Department of Education Organization Act. A proactive ED Office for Gender Equity would also complement the parallel offices charged with leadership and coordination on gender issues in federal health agencies, Department of Labor, and the U.S. Department of State.

The gender equity community has been a long-time supporter of the GEEA and its predecessor, the Women’s Educational Equity Act (WEEA), which was the only federal legislation specifically focused on implementing Title IX. The current version of GEEA--the Patsy T. Mink and Louise K. Slaughter Gender Equity Education Act of 2019-20
(S. 1964, HR 3513) sponsored by Senator Mazie Hirono and Representative Doris Matsui outlines the many responsibilities of the Office, such as policy making, training, dissemination, and federal coordination within ED as well as with other government offices. It also emphasizes the need for intersectional approaches to gender and other civil rights protections.

Hopefully, when the 117th Congress passes GEEA, the existing Office for Gender Equity would assume responsibility for implementing the GEEA grants program to expand the necessary gender equity infrastructure, including well-trained Title IX Coordinators and gender equity experts. As appropriate, the Office for Gender Equity would also be home for other legislative gender equity programs, dealing with sexual harassment and assault, STEM, athletics and of course it would coordinate closely with the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and White House equity initiatives.

Establishing an Office for Gender Equity at the beginning of the Biden-Harris Administration is an important and unmistakable signal of support for gender equity leadership. It gives the Biden-Harris Administration a head start on strengthening the Department’s capacity to address gender equity and will be an important asset in securing passage and needed implementation funding for GEEA and other civil rights legislation.

We urge the Transition Team to recommend the establishment of an Office for Gender Equity in the Biden-Harris Department of Education as soon as possible. Thank you for your consideration.

Cordially,

Feminist Majority Foundation-Eleanor Smeal, President and Sue Klein, Ed.D, Education Equity Director.

**Organizations that signed as of 1-8-21: (117 organizations)**

1st Amendment-1st Vote, Inc.
Activism Caucus of the Association for Women in Psychology
Alcyone LLC
Allies Reaching for Equity
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
Arkansas Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, Equity Assistance Center
Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation
Autistic Self Network
BHS Stop Harassing
BRAV Consultations
California National Organization for Women
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@Network for Healthy Families and Communities
Catholics for Choice
Center for Advancement of Public Policy
Center for Partnership Studies
Central New York NOW Chapter
Champion Women
Charlottesville National Organization for Women
Claremont Graduate University-Applied Gender Studies
Clearinghouse on Women’s Issue
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Collin College
Committee for Equity in Women’s Surfing
Democratic Womens Club of The Villages, FL
Disability Rights New York
Displaced Homemakers Network of New Jersey, Inc.
Durham NOW, Pauli Murray Chapter
East Valley Indivisibles
Education Law Center-PA
Equal Means Equal
End Rape on Campus
ERA Coalition
Feminist Majority Foundation
Florida NOW
Florida NOW Education Fund
Gender & Sexuality Studies Program at The University of Miami
Girls Inc.
Girls on the Run International
Guam Department of Education
Healthy Teen Network
High School Title IX Consulting Services, LLC
Hollywood Chapter, National Organization for Women
Illinois Accountability Initiative
Indiana NOW
Institute for Women’s Policy Research
Japanese American Citizens League
Jewish Women International
Justice for Migrant Women
Langelan & Associates
Legal Momentum, the Women’s Legal Defense and Education Fund
Liberal Ladies Who Lunch of SE Kansas
Loudoun County NOW
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Maryland Commission for Women
Maryland National Organization for Women
Maryland Women’s Heritage Center
Michigan NOW Fund’s Heritage Center
Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health (MOASH)
Monmouth County Democratic Women’s Caucus
Monroe County NOW
Montgomery County MD Chapter, National Organization for Women
Ms. Magazine
Multicultural Dimensions
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Congress of Black Women, Inc
National Council of Negro Women, Inc.
National Equal Rights Amendment Alliance, Inc
National Organization for Women
National Organization for Women, Alaska
National Organization for Women, Baltimore City/County
National Organization for Women, Columbia (MO) Area
National Organization for Women, Seattle Chapter
National Organization for Women, Texas
National Partnership for Women and Families
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
National Women’s Law Center
National Women’s Political Caucus
New Moon Girls
Ni-Ta-Nee NOW (Centre County PA National Organization for Women)
North Jersey Sierra Group
Northern New Jersey NOW
Ohio National Organization for Women
Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition
Picture Social Justice, Inc.
Pinellas County National Organization for Women
Racial Unity Team (RUT)
Renew California
Reproaction
Saving Democracy Team of the Villages, FL
Shift Cultures: One Student
Shrewsbury, New Jersey, Democratic Club
Sociologists for Women in Society
South Jersey NOW-Alice Paul chapter
Southwest PA National Organization for Women
Sport Equity
Stop Sexual Assault in Schools
Tacoma NOW
The Hub Project
The Global Community of Women in High School Sports
The Goddess Temple of Palm Springs
The Unity Council
US National Committee for UN Women
University of Hawaii at Manoa, Dept. of Women’s Studies and Dept. of English
Virginia NOW, Inc.
VoteERA.org
Washington State National Organization for Women
Westchester NY National Organization for Women
Wild West Women, Inc.
Women Enabled International
Women Leading in Education Across Continents
Women’s Equal Justice Project
Women's Media Center’s
Women’s Sports Foundation
Women’s Studies Department, Old Dominion University
YWCA USA

Additional Well Known Individuals who signed:
Lawrence Bloom, former Chicago City Council Member
Letty Cottin Pogrebin, co-founder of Ms. Magazine, writer and activist