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February 19, 2025

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our 3 million members and the 50 million students they serve, we urge you to VOTE NO on Linda McMahon for Secretary of Education. Votes on this issue may be included in NEA's report card for the 119th Congress.

### **Defunding and dismantling public schools**

Most Americans, including parents, do not share Ms. McMahon's agenda of defunding and dismantling public schools. To the contrary, they share our view that every student deserves opportunities, resources, and support to reach their full potential—no matter where they live, the color of their skin, or how much their family earns. Public schools exist to provide those opportunities.

Ms. McMahon has indicated that as Secretary of Education, she would prioritize efforts to redirect public funds from public schools—which educate 90 percent of our students, including 95 percent of those with disabilities—to private and religious schools that are not accountable to the public. She would carry out the Project 2025 plan to privatize the student loan system, dismantle the department she is nominated to lead, and narrow fundamental rights and protections for students, including Title IX.

The consequences would be severe, especially in rural communities where public schools are the economic center. Class sizes would rise. Students with disabilities would lose essential services—a stunning change in policy that is already underway despite the lack of congressional approval. School-based mental health supports would wither. Millions of students all across America could lose access to career, technical, and higher education.

### **Micromanaging what happens in classrooms**

The Department of Education is NOT a national school board. Nor does it control the power of the purse—that is the role of Congress. Moreover, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) explicitly prohibits federal employees from mandating, directing, or controlling state school districts or schools' instructional content, academic standards, curricula, or programs of instruction.

Nevertheless, in testimony at last week's confirmation hearing, Ms. McMahon suggested that she would be an unprecedented micromanager of what is taught—or even said—in classrooms across America and after-school clubs for students. Withholding congressionally-appropriated funding could be in play as well. When asked whether funding could be withheld from schools in light of recent Executive Orders—for example, for teaching African-American history or having a Vietnamese-American student club—Ms. McMahon demurred and said, "I'm not quite certain, and I'd like to look into it further."

### **Lacks basic qualifications and knowledge**

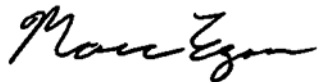
Ms. McMahon is unqualified for the position of Secretary of Education. She has no significant background in public schools, nor any understanding of what it takes to help students thrive. For most of her career, she was CEO of World Wrestling Entertainment, a company accused of shady business practices and abusive treatment of employees and youth.

During last week's hearing, Ms. McMahon demonstrated that she also lacks basic knowledge about the federal role in education. She was unfamiliar with ESSA provisions that safeguard local control. She could not describe the purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Yet she did not hesitate to speculate about shifting oversight and administration of special education programs to the Department of Health and Human Services—a move that could undo decades of progress in looking at students with disabilities as *students* first, and prioritizing academic goals.

At one point, Ms. McMahon said she hopes to learn on the job what is required of a Secretary of Education. With far-reaching responsibilities that impact the education of 50 million students in nearly every town, city, and county in America, Secretary of Education is not a "learn on the job" position. Today's students—America's future leaders and workforce—deserve better.

For all these reasons, we urge you to VOTE NO on Linda McMahon for Secretary of Education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Egan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marc Egan  
Director of Government Relations  
National Education Association