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## Project 2025: What's At Stake for Education

**What is Project 2025?** It's a wish list of right-wing policies, reflecting an extreme Christian nationalist ideology, written by the Heritage Foundation and more than 100 other conservative groups as a blueprint for a potential conservative administration. It is an explicit effort to further empower the presidency, embed ideologues in nonpartisan civil service, and enable the executive branch to unravel the civil rights movement's gains over the last seven decades.

The full agenda, which is more than 900 pages long, would completely reshape our federal government in order to benefit white nationalists, the rich and powerful, and religiously motivated bigots. Here are few top examples of how the civil rights of children in schools would be harmed by this radical proposal:

- **Gutting Enforcement of Civil Rights Laws:** Project 2025 proposes that the Departments of Education and Justice (ED and DOJ) should enforce civil rights laws only in the courts, eliminating important administrative tools to address discrimination. The overwhelming majority of complaints of discrimination in schools are handled through administrative enforcement by ED's Office for Civil Rights (resolution agreements). Without this process, fewer students would see schools and districts change their policies and processes to prevent further discrimination, and fewer schools would have examples of how to comply with the law.
- **Narrowing the Definition of Discrimination:** Project 2025 proposes to hide discrimination through redefinition, eliminating the disparate impact standard. This narrowing would mean that discrimination that is experienced through racial disparities (such as in school discipline, resource equity, and access to higher level courses) would be swept under the rug, and our civil rights laws would be blunted from providing the justice students deserve. At the same time, Project 2025 proposes to weaponize civil rights laws to censor efforts to achieve diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility and ensure books and curriculum reflect our diverse student body.
- **Abolishing the Department of Education:** While dismantling the department is practically impossible, this pronouncement shows the risks Project 2025 poses to educational opportunity. In addition to gutting federal funding, undercutting civil rights enforcement, and eviscerating the agency's responsibility to promote equal educational opportunity, attacking the federal role in education would halt and reverse progress we have made in ensuring all students have the chance to learn, grow, and thrive.

- **Cutting Funding to Public Schools:** Not only does Project 2025 propose a phase out in federal education funding, this roadmap to ruin also calls for the block granting of Title I and other federal programs so that funds can be diverted from marginalized children to their wealthier peers — meaning less support for children in concentrated poverty and exacerbated disparities based on family income, race, disability, and first language.
- **Promoting School Vouchers:** Project 2025 would encourage taxpayer funds to flow to private K12 schools with no guarantees that the money would not be used to discriminate or proselytize. Not only would this undermine the protections provided in public schools, but it would also hollow out the public school system and exacerbate barriers to education for children, especially those who are LGBTQI, religious minorities, or disabled.
- **Marginalizing Disabled Students of Color:** In spite of longstanding evidence that students of color are more likely to be inappropriately identified as disabled, and that disabled students of color are more likely to be subject to exclusionary discipline and segregated from their nondisabled peers, Project 2025 attacks efforts to ensure equity in the administration of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This specific attack compounds the harms Project 2025 already creates by its proposal to block grant IDEA and undermine legal protections for students with disabilities.
- **Explicitly Attacking LGBTQI Students:** Project 2025 explicitly seeks to make school more difficult for LGBTQI students, undermine their civil rights, and put them in danger. This includes changes to data collection to make nonbinary children disappear, rescission of the recent Title IX regulation (which also protects students from sexual harassment and discrimination based on pregnancy), assertions that students have no individual rights of their own, the sanctioning of disrespect and harassment of children by adults, and the advancement of narrow and regressive definitions of sex and gender with no basis in science, reality, or lived experience.
- **Ending Loan Forgiveness:** Project 2025 proposes that student loan borrowers be permanently saddled with debt by requiring them to keep paying even when their incomes are low, when they were defrauded, or when they have already been paying for more than 25 years. Doubling down on the attack on borrowers, the Project 2025 agenda also seeks to reinsert banks and private lenders into the student loan system, prioritizing profit over public service.
- **Encouraging Discriminatory School Discipline:** Project 2025 decries the recent attention paid to disparities in suspensions, expulsions, and contact with law enforcement across lines of race and disability, rejecting the research consensus that discriminatory exclusionary discipline is harmful to children and calling for ignorance of the problem. This would exacerbate a longstanding problem that denies too many children, especially students of color and students with disabilities, an education.