



American Federation  
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

February 14, 2017

Betsy DeVos  
Secretary of Education  
Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

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AFT Teachers  
AFT PSRP  
AFT Higher Education  
AFT Public Employees  
AFT Nurses and Health  
Professionals

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Dear Secretary DeVos:

I watched this morning as you and President Trump reinforced the concerns raised by millions of parents, students, educators and the broader public during your confirmation process. Ninety percent of children in America attend public school, including children whose parents voted for Donald Trump. Yet, from what we could discern the president's first meeting in the White House on education was used as a platform to denigrate—not strengthen—public schools with primarily private and home-schooling educators and parents as a backdrop.

Instead of continuing on a path of undermining public schools, we urge you—indeed challenge you—to take the more responsible path—to do the hard work that your oath of office as secretary of education requires. Demonstrate that you take seriously the responsibility that the Senate bestowed on you, not through photo ops or sound bites, but by responding in a real and thoughtful way to what parents and teachers need to strengthen our public schools for the students who attend and need them.

I invite you to see the broad diversity that is our strength, but also the challenges presented by the fact that half our children live in poverty. That is a factor that can neither be an excuse or ignored in our quest to help every single child climb up that ladder of opportunity.

I invite you to visit a public school, to spend hours in our classrooms, cafeterias, hallways, libraries, community rooms, nurses' offices or all the little crevices and corners inside and outside school buildings where educators engage, nurture and grow this generation of children. Ask



The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

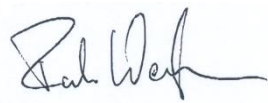


DeVos/Page 2

teachers what they need to be successful, or paraprofessionals how they spend their days. Talk to parents about supports they would like for their students, or ask them what they like about their public schools. Ask students about their educational experience. This—more than any particular ideology—will help inform every decision you make as secretary.

You are now the secretary of education for *all* of the students in the United States. Public school teachers and parents all over America are waiting for you to walk their walk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randi Weingarten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Randi Weingarten  
President

RW:emc opeiu#2 afl-cio