



National Council of Jewish Women

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January 11, 2017

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray,

On behalf of the 90,000 members and supporters of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), I write to urge you to reject the nomination of Betsy DeVos to be Secretary of the US Department of Education.

Betsy DeVos has spent most of her adult life promoting charter schools at the expense of public education and pushing for publicly funded vouchers for religious schools. She has used her considerable family wealth in her home state of Michigan to denigrate public education, shift funds from public school budgets to vouchers and charter schools, and undermine the very idea of public education, which she terms a 'government monopoly.'

Government funding of religious institutions threatens the First Amendment by putting the government in the position of endorsing or rejecting religious groups when deciding how to award scarce human-needs funding. NCJW vigorously opposes federal funding for faith-based institutions that discriminate in their hiring policies. Religious liberty and the separation of religion and state are constitutional principles that must be protected and preserved in order to maintain a democratic society.

In addition to her support of school vouchers, DeVos has donated millions of dollars to anti-LGBTQ causes under the auspices of her family's charities. DeVos' own foundation donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to Focus on

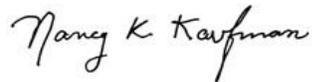
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the Family, an organization that labels transgender people “broken.” The Department of Education is responsible for implementing and enforcing laws protecting students from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex and disability and those laws that provide for educational opportunity from early childhood through graduate school. The person responsible for leading that department must absolutely be committed to respecting, valuing and protecting every single student in this country — without regard to LGBTQ status, family income, race, home language, gender, religion, disability or immigration status. DeVos’ history raises doubts as to whether she will protect the safety of LGBTQ students in our schools.

If confirmed, DeVos would undermine one of the crowning achievements of American democracy — free public education for all students through high school. We urge you to reject her confirmation

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy K. Kaufman".

Nancy K. Kaufman
CEO, National Council of Jewish Women