



DeVos and Trump Put Vulnerable Students in Jeopardy in Colorado

By Ulrich Boser and Danny Schwaber January 25, 2017

Many of the details of President Donald Trump's and his secretary of education nominee Betsy DeVos' education plans are vague. What we do know, however, paints a troubling picture for America's students.

Trump has proposed a plan to “reprioritiz[e]” \$20 billion from existing federal education programs—more than half of the U.S. Department of Education's funding for K-12 education—to a voucher-like school choice system.¹ This plan would be devastating for public schools across the country and could potentially siphon off billions of dollars to be redirected to private schools.

What is more, Trump has proposed eliminating the Department of Education. This plan would be equally disastrous: It would abolish the jobs of half a million teachers while taking away college funding from 8 million students.

Betsy DeVos has all but endorsed this approach, saying that she will “work with the President-elect on his vision to make American education great again.”² Given DeVos' track record of steering taxpayer money away from public schools to for-profit charter schools and religious schools, this is unsurprising.³

But the dismal results in DeVos' home state of Michigan should give Americans pause.⁴ Recent analysis from the Center for American Progress Action Fund illustrates that the critical federal funding for low-income and special education students in Colorado would be put at risk if DeVos and Trump get their way.⁵

U.S. high school graduation rates are hitting historic highs, test scores are improving, and dropout rates are dropping.⁶ Trump and DeVos are putting all of this progress in jeopardy and risk stripping funds from states such as Colorado with no clear plan for ensuring that vulnerable students get the education they deserve.

Here is what the Trump-DeVos \$20 billion reprioritization plan puts at risk for Colorado's students:

- \$255 million in federal education funding for Colorado would be threatened, endangering critical programs and safety nets for vulnerable students.⁷

Here is what the Trump-DeVos proposal to cut the Department of Education puts at risk for Colorado's students:

- \$449 million in Pell Grants for Colorado's students would be lost.⁸
- 6,736 or more teacher positions in Colorado could be eliminated.⁹
- \$1.94 billion in student loans would be at risk for Colorado's college students.¹⁰

Betsy DeVos' nonanswers about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act fund leave Colorado's disabled students with tremendous uncertainty.¹¹

- \$175 million in federal funding through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for special education students in Colorado would be jeopardized.¹²

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Endnotes

1 Donald J. Trump, "New School Choice Policies to Be Unveiled by Donald J. Trump Today," Press Release, September 8, 2016, available at <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/new-school-choice-policies-to-be-unveiled-by-donald-j-trump-today>; U.S. Department of Education, *Fiscal Year 2016 Congressional Action* (2016), available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget16/faction.pdf>.

2 Betsy DeVos, "Facebook," November 24, 2016, available at <https://www.facebook.com/betsy.p.devos/posts/1877209665847661>.

3 Kate Zernike, "Betsy DeVos, Trump's Education Pick, Has Steered Money From Public Schools," *The New York Times*, November 23, 2016, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/23/us/politics/betsy-devos-trumps-education-pick-has-steered-money-from-public-schools.html?_r=0.

4 Caitlin Emma, Benjamin Wermund, and Kimberly Hefling, "DeVos' Michigan schools experiment gets poor grades," *Politico*, December 9, 2016, available at <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/12/betsy-devos-michigan-school-experiment-232399>.

5 U.S. Department of Education, *Funds for State Formula-Allocated and Selected Student Aid Programs* (2016), available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/statetables/17stbtystate.pdf>.

6 U.S. Department of Education, "U.S. High School Graduation Rate Hits New Record High," December 15, 2015, available at <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-high-school-graduation-rate-hits-new-record-high-0>; Collaborative for Student Success, "It's Still Early, But Test Results Appear to Show Improvements," available at http://forstudentsuccess.org/its-still-early-but-test-results-appear-to-show-improvements/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=cfs&utm_content=2++Its+Still+Early+But+Test+Results+Appear+&utm_campaign=Daily+Roundup+08-16-16&source=Daily+Roundup+08-16-16 (last accessed January 2017).

7 Neil Campbell, Ulrich Boser, and Will Ragland, "Trump's Plan to Decimate Public Education," Center for American Progress Action Fund, October 12, 2016, available at <https://www.americanprogressaction.org/issues/education/news/2016/10/12/162913/trumps-plan-to-decimate-public-education/>.

8 Will Ragland and Ulrich Boser, "Trump's Plan to Eliminate the Department of Education is Yet Another in a List of Terrible Ideas," Center for American Progress Action Fund, September 1, 2016, available at <https://www.americanprogressaction.org/issues/education/news/2016/09/01/162258/trumps-plan-to-eliminate-the-department-of-education-is-yet-another-in-a-list-of-terrible-ideas/>.

9 Ibid.

10 U.S. Department of Education, *Funds for State Formula-Allocated and Selected Student Aid Programs*.

11 Chuck Schumer, "Betsy DeVos fails @timkaine's test at Senate hearing," Twitter, January 17, 2017, available at <https://twitter.com/SenSchumer/status/821550942382268416>.

12 Ragland and Boser, "Trump's Plan to Eliminate the Department of Education is Yet Another in a List of Terrible Ideas."