A close up of a sign

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Dear DLD Members and Community,

We are reaching out to encourage you to engage in [**Calls to Action**](https://exceptionalchildren.org/takeaction) shared by our parent organization, CEC, earlier this week. Many of you already have, and continue to do so. Thank you. Keep going. Please continue to make your voice heard.

The Division for Learning Disabilities’ (DLD) mission is to promote effective practices that improve the learning and well-being of individuals with learning disabilities (LD). We value our history, which is rooted in activism and advocacy for the educational rights of individuals with LD. To that end, we are responding to recent and proposed changes at the federal level impacting the education system in the United States. We share our concerns, ways to learn more information about the topic, and suggested actions for community members.

[**IDEA and the Department of Education**](https://exceptionalchildren.org/takeaction)

We are concerned about the federal government’s debate on shrinking or eliminating the Department of Education. Much of the work at the Department of Education supports individuals who experience challenges with academic performance, inclusive of those who are formally identified with LD and those with other learning differences. **Access the CEC Call to Action** here: [Support Children w/Disabilities: Keep IDEA at the Department of Education.](https://exceptionalchildren.org/takeaction)

[**Funding Critical Education Research**](https://exceptionalchildren.org/takeaction)

We are concerned about cuts to funding and staffing at the Department of Education, including the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). The knowledge we have about effective instruction because of rigorous research funded by IES is instrumental to ensuring students with LD have access to meaningful and beneficial education. **Access the CEC Call to Action** here: [Oppose Cancellation of Critical Education Research](https://exceptionalchildren.org/takeaction). The proposed cuts to the Department of Education and IES will impact students and families and have long standing repercussions on educational practices. You can learn more about these cuts here:

* [NPR: Trump Administration Targets Ed Dept Research Arm in Latest Cuts](https://www.npr.org/2025/02/10/nx-s1-5292444/trump-musk-education-department-schools-students-research-cuts)
* [Chalkbeat: Trump Executive Orders on DEI & Schools Big on Drama, but Impact Will Take Time to Emerge](https://www.chalkbeat.org/2025/02/03/trump-orders-on-dei-and-vouchers-seek-to-increase-his-power-over-schools/)

[**Section 504 Protections**](https://exceptionalchildren.org/takeaction?vvsrc=/Campaigns/121781/Respond)

We are concerned about the recent lawsuit by 17 states to eliminate protections under Section 504 by declaring Section 504, 29 U.S.C. § 794 unconstitutional.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act states: “No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States, as defined in [section 705(20) of this title](https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/29/705#20), shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any [program or activity](https://www.law.cornell.edu/definitions/uscode.php?width=840&height=800&iframe=true&def_id=29-USC-649209584-1973027401&term_occur=999&term_src=) receiving Federal financial assistance or under any [program or activity](https://www.law.cornell.edu/definitions/uscode.php?width=840&height=800&iframe=true&def_id=29-USC-649209584-1973027401&term_occur=999&term_src=) conducted by any Executive agency or by the United States Postal Service.”

The lawsuit is explicitly targeting the inclusion of gender dysphoria as a disability in Section 504 and is asking that all of Section 504, 29 U.S.C. § 794 be declared unconstitutional.Declaring Section 504 unconstitutional will allow schools, programs, and activities that receive federal funding to exclude, reject, and discriminate against ANY students with ANY disabilities. Again, these protections are critical for individuals identified with LD and those with other disabilities. Outcomes of this lawsuit will immediately hurt students and families by stripping them of their rights and eliminating anti-discrimination protections based on a disability. This lawsuit also sets a dangerous precedent for future actions to reduce the rights of individuals with disabilities. **Access the CEC Call to Action** here: [Preserve Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act](https://exceptionalchildren.org/takeaction?vvsrc=/Campaigns/121781/Respond). You can learn more about this lawsuit here:

* [DREDF: Texas v Becerra: What it is and How You Can Help Stop the Attack on Section 504](https://dredf.org/protect-504/)
* [US District Court: Northern District of Texas Complaint Document](https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/images/press/HHS%20Rehabilitation%20Act%20Complaint%20Filestamped.pdf)

As disability rights history demonstrates, we are stronger together.

**Ways to Take Action:**

We urge DLD members to take action by contacting their representatives. CEC makes this very easy through their Action Alerts. It only takes a minute to fill out their web form and your representatives will receive a message expressing your concern. Members of Congress are paying attention to the number of messages and calls they receive. Visit [CEC Take Action](https://exceptionalchildren.org/takeaction)

You can also visit: [Take Action: Tell Congress to Push Back Against Executive Overreach](https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/action-center/take-action/tell-congress-push-back-against-executive-overreach)

If you are able to contact your representatives directly (via phone or an in-person visit), here is a **sample script** from [5 Calls](https://5calls.org/):

*Hello, my name is [Your Name], and I am a constituent from [Your City, State]. I’m also a member of the Council for Exceptional Children Division for Learning Disabilities. I would like to speak with [Representative’s Name] or their education policy staffer regarding urgent issues affecting students with disabilities.*

*I’m calling to express my deep concern over the pause and cancellation of research funding from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). This funding supports essential research on reading, math, writing, dyslexia, autism, and special education—work that directly improves outcomes for students, teachers, and families. I am also calling today to express my concerns about the recent attacks on Section 504 protections. These changes will have devastating consequences for students with disabilities and undermine decades of progress in inclusive education.*

*Section 504 is a vital civil rights protection that ensures students with disabilities receive the accommodations they need to succeed in school. Weakening these protections would leave many vulnerable students without the support they require. Additionally, cuts to IES and educational research will limit innovation and progress in understanding and supporting diverse learning needs.*

*I urge [Representative’s Name] to take a stand against any efforts to weaken Section 504 and to oppose cuts to IES educational research funding. Will the Representative commit to protecting these critical resources for students with disabilities?*

*Thank you for your time. I appreciate your leadership on this issue.*

We thank you for your continued partnership in our shared work addressing the needs of learners within the context of the education system in the United States.

Lisa Goran, PhD, CCC-SLP

DLD President

Elizabeth Hughes, PhD

DLD President-Elect

David Bateman, PhD

DLD Vice President