

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 24, 2025

Linda McMahon
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary McMahon:

We write to demand you defend students in Illinois and around the Nation by taking swift action to ensure the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) stops conducting civil immigration enforcement activities within 1,000 feet of any school properties. We recognize you support eliminating your job as Secretary of Education through the destruction of the U.S. Department of Education. However, so long as taxpayers are paying your salary, you are responsible for protecting the right of children to learn in a safe and secure environment, free of the chaos and fear inflicted by out-of-control Federal agents recklessly using chemical agents and excessive force within footsteps of school grounds.

Since *Operation Midway Blitz* began, masked Federal law enforcement officers have increased their presence around Chicago Public Schools buildings and other places of education, employing violent tactics that disrupt learning and school operations. For example:

- On October 3, 2025, a Federal agent irresponsibly threw multiple canisters of tear gas to disperse a single motorcycle driver blocking the agents' way while operating less than 700 feet from Funston Elementary School during the lunch hour—forcing the school to shift recess and activities inside for the rest of the day to protect students from the gratuitous use of chemical agents near an elementary school; and
- On October 8, 2025, unidentified, masked Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers forcefully dragged two women out of a car in front of a school on the West Side of Chicago, violently detaining them without presenting a warrant, as children and parents watched on in horror.

Such interactions defy DHS' false claim that its agents could be trusted to "use common sense" around students after Secretary Noem imprudently rescinded DHS' protected areas guidance in January 2025. Federal agents continue to use unwarranted, excessive levels of force around Chicago, demonstrating an alarming lack of care or regard for the health and wellbeing of children, particularly by conducting unfocused, inflammatory operations within close proximity of school grounds.

You have expressed concern that American students' standardized test scores are trending lower and that the achievement gap is widening, yet this administration has not taken any actions to

alleviate these concerns. DHS' enforcement operations around schools will clearly exacerbate learning loss by inflicting fear, trauma and stress on students—who are increasingly considering skipping school out of fear their family members will be detained during pick up and drop off—as well as parents and educators. If you are sincere in your commitment to American students' educational outcomes, you would do well to take swift, decisive action to demand DHS cease its irresponsible operations near schools.

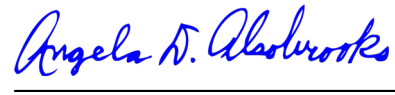
Considering DHS' failure to protect American students, we demand you pressure your colleague, Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem, to reinstate restrictions on Federal immigration enforcement operations in and around places of education. Specifically, we ask that you act to ensure that Federal agents operating in the Chicago area in relation to *Operation Midway Blitz* are prohibited from conducting enforcement operations within 1,000 feet of public and private schools in Illinois. If society can agree that alcohol, tobacco and drugs should be kept at least 1,000 feet away from our schools, surely we can agree that tear gas—a chemical weapon which causes burning, pain, skin inflammation and respiratory distress—and other violent DHS tools and tactics also belong on that list.

All students deserve to attend school and learn without fear of being tear gassed, witnessing violence or becoming the target of indiscriminate immigration enforcement. We hope that you will rise to meet the significant responsibility your office demands and act swiftly to protect the health and wellbeing of our students.

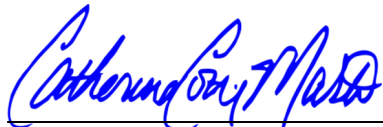
Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



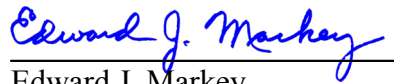
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Andy Kim
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator