February 28, 2017

Director of the Information Collection Clearance Division
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
LBJ, Room 224-82
Washington, DC 20202-4537

Docket No.: ED-2016-ICCD-0147 (Civil Rights Data Collection)

Dear Acting Director Valentine:

We are writing on behalf of the undersigned civil rights organizations, scholars and educators to urge you and your colleagues to approve the information collection request you recently posted for the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC). In particular, this comment responds to the first and second questions you posed to commenters, based on our work as advocates, educators, and academic researchers concerned with equal educational opportunity.

As to your first question—the extent to which this collection is necessary to the proper functioning of the Department—the answer is resoundingly yes. The Department is tasked by statute with overseeing the proper implementation of the civil rights laws that apply to schools, including Title VI, Title IX, and Section 504. The Department is also tasked by statute with overseeing the proper implementation of laws such as the Every Student Succeeds Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, both of which include equity as part of their goals. The data in the CRDC provide important information to the Department about how SEAs and LEAs are implementing these laws. Moreover, data collection has long been an important part of the Department’s work, including during the time when the Department was merely the Office for Education in earlier administrative incarnations. Even those who advocate for a smaller federal footprint in education have often recognized that data collection would remain an important part of any reduced federal role.

As to your second question—the extent to which this information will be processed and used in a timely manner—the answer here, too, is that assuming the Department makes the data available in a timely manner, LEAs and local stakeholders will surely use the data in a timely manner. This is because the data in the CRDC are crucial for both LEAs and local stakeholders to assess how the work of schools is unfolding in local communities. The ease with which communities can examine the CRDC results and determine how they are faring on the important measures the data present makes it possible for communities to self-correct. Communities can also examine how neighboring communities and communities around the country of similar sizes and with similar demographics are doing. The data therefore represent an important mechanism that permits local control and local decision-making about how to improve. The data provide an opportunity for LEAs around the country to share their own best practices. The data also allow parents and other local stakeholders to see what their communities are doing in comparison to other communities, providing parents more information with which they can make more informed choices.

For all of these reasons, we urge you to maintain your commitment to full data collection in the CRDC and to sharing that data in easily accessible online formats.
Very truly yours,

Eloise Pasachoff
Professor of Law
Georgetown Law School
Washington, DC*

Philip Tegeler
Poverty & Race Research Action Council
Washington, DC

Kimberly Tignor
Brenda Shum
Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Washington, DC

Richard Kahlenberg
Halley Potter
The Century Foundation
Washington, DC

Dianne Piché,
National Coalition of Diverse Charter Schools
Washington, DC

Gary Orfield
Civil Rights Project at UCLA
Los Angeles, CA

Courtney Everts Mykytyn
Integrated Schools
Los Angeles, CA

Matt Cregor
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice
Boston, MA

V. Elaine Gross
ERASE Racism
Syosset, NY

Sharon Davies
Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity
Columbus, OH

Jonas Barriere
UnifiEd
Chattanooga, TN

David Hinojosa
Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA)
San Antonio, TX
Kevin Welner
University of Colorado
Boulder, CO*

Casey D. Cobb
University of Connecticut
Storrs, CT

Richard L. Roe
Georgetown Law School
Washington, DC*

Jason P. Nance
University of Florida Levin College of Law
Gainesville, FL*

Vanessa Siddle Walker
Emory University
Atlanta, GA*

Linda Tropp
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA*

Michael Gregory
Harvard Law School
Cambridge MA*

Samuel Bagenstos
University of Michigan Law School
Ann Arbor, MI*

Kristi Bowman
Michigan State University College of Law
East Lansing, MI*

Catherine Y. Kim
UNC School of Law
Chapel Hill, NC*

Kara Finnegan
University of Rochester
Rochester, NY*

Erica Frankenberg
Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA*

Derek Black
University of South Carolina School of Law
Columbia, SC*

Genevieve Siegel-Hawley
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, VA*

Kimberly Jenkins Robinson
University of Richmond School of Law
Richmond, VA*

Jennifer Jellison Holme
University of Texas
Austin, TX*

*University affiliations provided for informational purposes only