



February 12, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy  
Chair  
U.S. Senate HELP Committee  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate HELP Committee  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cassidy and Ranking Member Sanders,

The Student Borrower Protection Center, a national non-profit organization committed to protecting student loan borrowers and ending the student debt crisis, writes to express our strong opposition to the nomination of Linda McMahon as Secretary of Education and urges you to oppose her nomination. Today, as more than 40 million Americans are crushed under the weight of the student debt crisis, working families with student debt deserve a Secretary of Education devoted to strengthening public education, committed to making the opportunity of a higher education accessible to all, and dedicated to defending students and strengthening borrower rights and protections. If she is confirmed, we believe that Linda McMahon will lead with blind loyalty to President Trump and help usher in his radical Project 2025 agenda at the expense of the American people.

**I. For the millions of students and families already struggling to pay for college and the crushing burden of the student debt crisis, the stakes have never been higher.**

President Trump has openly touted his plans to roll back relief efforts that have now freed more than [5 million Americans from their student loan debt](#). His right-wing Project 2025 agenda seeks to radically reshape our government at the expense of working families. Among the slew of policy proposals Project 2025 calls for are [shuttering the doors of the U.S. Department of Education](#) (the Department) and [privatizing the federal student loan system](#), forcing millions of [borrowers to pay even more on their monthly student loan bills](#), [eliminating the Public Service Loan Forgiveness \(PSLF\) program](#), and even [rolling back critical safeguards](#) that protect students and families when they are cheated by predatory schools. Many of these efforts have already begun to take shape as President Trump is reportedly finalizing plans to take executive action to dismantle the Department and is actively working to illegally shutter the doors of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). If confirmed, McMahon would be charged with overseeing

the very agency President Trump expects to see dismantled and set into motion the chaos and disruption that would fall on students, borrowers, and working families as a result.

## **II. Linda McMahon’s lack of substantive education experience makes her wholly unqualified to lead the Department and her track record demonstrates she would push policies that would disproportionately harm students and working families with student debt.**

If confirmed, Linda McMahon will be responsible for ensuring all children are able to get a quality public education and that students and working families are able to access affordable and high-quality higher education and training without having to take on a lifetime of student debt. However, McMahon’s [lack of substantive education experience](#), including her efforts to [fabricate claims of having an education degree](#), and longtime track record as a Trump donor and loyalist, should raise serious questions about her judgment and integrity, and sound alarms that she could be the perfect “rubber stamp” Secretary to shepherd President Trump’s most harmful Project 2025 policies. When announcing McMahon’s nomination, President Trump declared “We will send Education BACK TO THE STATES, and Linda will spearhead that effort,” making it clear that McMahon will be expected to drive efforts to gut the Department and roll back critical protections and benefits for students and borrowers.

While McMahon has remained silent on her plans to deliver on President Trump’s Project 2025 promises of eliminating the Department, she already has a track record of pushing policies in alignment with this right-wing agenda that would disproportionately harm students and borrowers. The right-wing America First Policy Institute (AFPI), where McMahon currently serves as Board Chair, worked with Attorney General Pam Bondi to [urge](#) the U.S. Supreme Court to strike down student debt cancellation efforts that would have provided relief to tens of millions of working families. The organization has also been a [vocal opponent of the Saving on a Valuable Education \(SAVE\) repayment plan](#), which made payments more affordable for more than 8 million borrowers before it was blocked by a federal court. If opponents of SAVE are successful in eliminating the repayment plan, millions of borrowers will see their [monthly payments spike](#), which would lead to increases in student loan delinquency and defaults, and push millions of families further into debt.

**III. If confirmed, Linda McMahon would be the wealthiest Trump Cabinet Secretary, and her proximity to corporate interests could make the Department a prime target for private-sector lobbying and profit-driven agendas at the expense of high-quality public education.**

While the nomination of Linda McMahon originally took most of the public and media by surprise, the trade association representing the for-profit college industry—notoriously known for leaving the [most vulnerable students with worthless degrees and mountains of debt](#)—issued a glowing endorsement, cheering her selection and boasting about how they look forward to working closely together. This should come as no surprise as the only higher education policy issue that McMahon *has* taken a public position on is her [support of allowing already limited Pell Grant dollars to fund extra-short-term bootcamps and predatory training programs](#)—including those offered at for-profits colleges and entirely online EdTech companies known as Online Program Managers (OPMs). OPMs and for-profit colleges have already been found to be some of the [biggest abusers](#) of federal financial aid programs. Data on these programs’ outcomes are [grim](#) and show that graduates are often left earning poverty-level wages. Advocates have [warned](#) that opening up the Pell Grant program could lead to an influx of shady business-driven educational models that push limited federal financial aid into corporate coffers.

Additionally, it appears that the Trump Administration is already staffing the Department with [for-profit college apologists](#) who have vocally opposed efforts to hold these shady institutions accountable for cheating students. If confirmed, McMahon would likely repeat the DeVos-era efforts to roll back regulations and oversight efforts aimed at reining in the for-profit sector and give the green light to the aggressive expansion of this industry. Making matters even worse, Congressional Republican [proposals](#) would make it harder for borrowers to access relief after being cheated by for-profit colleges as part of efforts to pay for tax cuts for the richest Americans and biggest corporations. Taken together, Linda McMahon and the radical Project 2025 agenda she will be tasked with implementing will make the process of going to and paying for college more expensive and risky for American families.

**IV. If confirmed, Linda McMahon will likely continue DeVos-era efforts to abandon student loan borrowers, allow student loan servicing abuses to run rampant, and allow private banks to profiteer off the student debt crisis.**

The Department is charged with managing a \$1.6 trillion dollar student loan portfolio—the equivalent of one of the largest consumer banks in the world. Over the last four years, the Biden Administration made [notable progress](#) in holding student loan servicers—the private companies

paid to help borrowers manage their student debt—accountable for failing to support borrowers and ensuring that borrowers are not harmed as a result of these failures. In [2023](#) and [2024](#), the Department announced that they would withhold payments from servicers for failing to send timely payments to millions of borrowers. The Biden Administration also announced efforts to coordinate with the CFPB and state attorneys general to ensure that servicers were complying with state consumer protection laws. These efforts were a strong and positive departure from the DeVos-era [actions](#) to block the [CFPB](#) and [state consumer protection agencies](#) from overseeing and enforcing federal and state consumer protection laws against student loan servicers. Now, as President Trump and the richest man on the planet, Elon Musk, work to dismantle the CFPB—having already halted the agency’s supervision and enforcement work—Linda McMahon could be further emboldened to do the bidding of student loan servicers at the expense of working families with student debt. In fact, the Department has already hired senior-level officials straight from [the trade association responsible for lobbying on behalf of student loan servicers and debt collectors](#)—a clear sign of whose side Linda McMahon will be on should she be confirmed.

Making matters even worse, if confirmed, Linda McMahon could be charged with delivering on Project 2025’s calls to privatize the federal student loan program, which would make the process of paying for college riskier and more expensive for students and families. Advocates have [sounded the alarm](#) on the [risks of private student lending](#) and the challenges private loan borrowers face when falling behind. If President Trump and Elon Musk are successful in dismantling the CFPB, millions of borrowers could be forced to navigate an even more dangerous private loan market with companies given free rein to prey and profiteer off students and their dreams of higher education.

Now more than ever, students, borrowers, and working families need an Education Secretary who will protect their interests, not the interests of private entities seeking to line their pockets off of our public education system. Now more than ever, students, borrowers, and working families need an Education Secretary who will protect them from the radical Project 2025 agenda that will push the opportunity of higher education further out of reach and exacerbate the student debt crisis. It is clear that Linda McMahon will not be that Education Secretary. We strongly urge your committee to reject her nomination.

Sincerely,

Student Borrower Protection Center