

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

March 12, 2021

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona:

Recently, the U.S. Department of Education announced the appointment of a “senior advisor for labor relations” within the Office of the Secretary. While various administrations have appointed senior advisors to focus on issues of importance, we were disappointed teachers unions’ concerns are being prioritized, in the absence of any other senior advisor appointments, above other critical stakeholders, namely students and parents.

A position created to focus on labor relations within the U.S. Department of Education is concerning.¹ As documented by meetings and media reports, the Administration has already given outsized opportunities for the teachers unions to weigh in on issues of policy. Creating a senior advisor for labor relations would indicate that the Department plans to maintain this specialized treatment for teachers unions. We are not questioning the crucial role that high-quality teachers play in educating our children; however, with the devastating impact that prolonged school closures have had on students, it seems the educational and social and emotional needs of children are being placed after the interests of adults.

This is not a critique of the individual hired for this role. We believe that the Secretary and the President have the right to fill available positions with individuals they find most qualified to serve. Our concern is focused on the creation of czar-like roles that are more focused on pleasing politically connected interest groups.

¹ <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-announces-more-biden-harris-appointees>

To understand the role and scope of the senior advisor for labor relations, we respectfully ask that you provide responses to the following questions no later than two weeks after receipt of this letter:

1. What is the job description for this position?
2. To whom will this position report and will the position include any additional staff?
3. What communications were had with groups or individuals outside of the Administration regarding this position? Please provide all email, phone logs, text messages, calendar meetings, and other correspondence between the Department, Administration at large, or transition team relating to this position and staffing choice.
4. What authority will this position have to make policy decisions related to programs administered by the Secretary?

As the Administration gets underway, it is critical to ensure you are staffing the Department with individuals looking out for what is in the best educational interests of children. Elevating union representation above the children of America's public school system is the wrong way to accomplish that.

Please contact Mandy Schaumburg, mandy.schaumburg@mail.house.gov with Ranking Member Foxx's staff and Kristin Spiridon, kristin.spiridon@help.senate.gov, with Ranking Member Burr's staff with any questions regarding this request. Thank you for your prompt reply to this letter.

Sincerely,



Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
House Committee on Education and Labor



Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions