



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

CLARE E. CONNORS
ATTORNEY GENERAL

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Hawaii Attorney General Calls for Administration to Suspend Efforts to Rewrite Policy on Sexual Assault, Harassment at Schools

HONOLULU – With Hawaii residents and schools nationwide addressing the tremendous challenges posed by COVID-19, Attorney General Clare E. Connors is working with 17 other Attorneys General in an effort to stop the Trump administration’s ongoing efforts to implement proposed Title IX rules that threaten protections at K-12 schools, colleges, and universities across the nation. The U.S. Department of Education proposed rule changes to Title IX in 2018, and continues to pursue these changes.

In a letter to U.S. Department of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, Acting Office of Management and Budget Director Russell Vought and others, the Attorneys General are asking for suspension of the rulemaking process until these institutions resume normal operations.

“Our DOE is focused on addressing the impacts of COVID-19 on our children,” said Attorney General Connors. “Now is a particularly poor time for the federal government to push through a plan that cuts protections for students who are victims of sexual harassment and assault.”

With at least 124,000 public and private schools—representing over 93 percent of all K-12 institutions—closed or planning to close, and more than 1,100 colleges and universities temporarily closed and transitioning to remote learning, the Attorneys General said prudence is the proper response.

“Finalizing the proposed rule now would ... cause significant confusion about ongoing Title IX complaints and investigations, which have already been disrupted by the sudden closures and social distancing requirements,” the letter reads. “With everything our schools and students are facing right now, we strongly urge you not to impose further substantial regulatory burdens.”

Attorney General Shapiro is leading 17 other Attorneys General in the letter to DeVos, including California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia.

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For more information, contact:

Krishna F. Jayaram
Special Assistant to the Attorney General
(808) 586-1284
Email: atg.pio@hawaii.gov
Web: <http://ag.hawaii.gov>
Twitter: @ATGHlgov