

Submitted via www.regulations.gov

Kenneth L. Marcus, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202

Re: Docket ID No. ED-2018-OCR-0064, RIN 1870-AA14, Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance

Dear Secretary Marcus,

The King County Sexual Assault Resource Center (KCSARC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Department's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking concerning Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as published in the Federal Register November 29, 2018.

KCSARC is the largest resource center in the Pacific Northwest, providing legal advocacy, evidence-based therapy, family education, prevention education and advocacy programs throughout King County, Washington.

Our nonprofit Resource Center, founded in 1976, has served hundreds of thousands of survivors over the last four decades. We directly served 4,888 clients in 2018, representing a 19% increase in demand for direct services to help survivors heal following sexual assault and abuse over the previous year. Half of those we serve are children, and we work closely with local school districts, universities and colleges, serving as a resource and referral agency in providing direct support to students and families.

We are concerned about proposed rule changes to Title IX protections that we believe will limit protections for survivors, and reduce the responsibility of school administrators.

Specifically, we oppose proposed changes that:

- Remove protections for victims who are assaulted off campus, including at fraternity houses and off-campus housing;
- Require that sexual harassment escalate to extreme and continuous levels before a Title IX complaint can be filed;
- Remove the 60-day time limit on investigations, which may leave the victim in limbo for an extended period of time; and
- Allow religiously affiliated schools to opt for Title IX exemption without notifying the Department of Education, making it more difficult for students and parents to discern whether Title IX nondiscrimination mandates will be enforced

Given the number of victims who have spoken out, the proposal ignores the epidemic of sexual assault and violence, including among college students, who face particular vulnerabilities and obstacles.

The key to ending sexual violence is bringing it out of the shadows, and encouraging more reporting when it happens. That fundamental concept has driven our work over the last four decades. National crime data indicates sexual assault is one of the most underreported crimes. We are pleased that there has been a 19% increase in demand for KCSARC's services. The reason? Survivors are finally beginning to understand they will be believed *and supported* when they choose to come forward, and from there, healing can begin.

By rolling back protections for victims and reducing administrative responsibility for protecting students, the proposed rule change undermines the progress we have made in the last four decades.

On behalf of the survivors we serve throughout King County, we strongly urge reconsideration of the proposed changes to Title IX, and instead, encourage the Department to support the strongest possible policies that acknowledge both the traumatic experience of sexual violence and the real barriers victims face in speaking up about their assault. We believe our systems can and must respond in a way that supports healing.

Respectfully,



Mary Ellen Stone, Executive Director
King County Sexual Assault Resource Center