



January 25, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chairwoman  
Incoming Ranking Member  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray, incoming Ranking Member, and members of the U.S. Senate HELP Committee:

On behalf of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), representing the nation's secondary principals and assistant principals, I am writing to urge you to vote "yes" on the confirmation of Miguel Cardona as U.S. secretary of education. I would also ask that the HELP Committee prioritize the confirmation of Cardona so his leadership can guide the U.S. Department of Education (ED) in aiding districts, schools, and educators across the country as they continue to navigate one of the most tumultuous times in American history.

Dr. Cardona is the first secretary of education nominee that NASSP has ever publicly endorsed. With this nomination, President Biden kept his pledge to elevate an educator with a proven track record in supporting and bolstering public education. Dr. Cardona's roles as a teacher, principal, district administrator, and Connecticut education commissioner provide him with a unique perspective of the challenges facing public education. The recognition and accolades he has received throughout his career, including the Connecticut 2012 elementary principal of the year award, underscores the education community's high regard for his effectiveness.

NASSP urges the HELP committee to make Dr. Cardona's confirmation a priority, as he faces a number of daunting tasks that speak immediately to the needs of students. In order to address those challenges, he will first be forced to rebuild an agency that has been ravaged by poor leadership and a lack of guidance for the past four years. The 2019 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey found that ED was the lowest rated of the 36 departments and independent agencies in the "large agency" category—a reality which drove out numerous career professionals, along with ED's institutional memory and intellectual capital. Dr. Cardona must have the opportunity to rebuild the department immediately.

Amid the ongoing pandemic, immediate support and guidance from ED is essential as schools continue to provide their students with the best learning opportunities possible. NASSP

specifically hopes Dr. Cardona and ED will prioritize answering some of the most pressing facing public education, including:

- Principals, teachers, and students have faced significant challenges this year and many are feeling increased stress due to the demands of navigating a school year during a COVID-19 pandemic. Opening schools will place additional stress on these individuals. What will the ED do to address the mental health needs of students and educators as the pandemic continues?
- Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, public education has been suffering teacher and principal shortages nationwide. Many educators are now accelerating their plans to leave these professions due to the working conditions caused by the pandemic. A 2020 survey from NASSP found that 45% of principals are considering leaving the profession due to the difficulties of working during the pandemic, exacerbating this already concerning issue. By contrast, the nation has seen an increase in individuals entering medical schools during the pandemic. Some have deemed this the “Fauci Effect.” Will ED actively work to bolster interest in education professions in a similar fashion to curb these shortages? And if so, how do they plan to do so?
- Principals have shouldered much of the burden for a variety of COVID related requirements for schools, including contact tracing, staff testing, and social distancing. How will the ED work with the Department of Health and Human Services to provide support to school leaders as they continue with these actions and with vaccine distribution as rollout continues throughout the nation?

The American public education system is at an inflection point. After suffering four years of attacks from a presidential administration and private school voucher advocates, additional strain has been placed on it by the COVID-19 pandemic. Strong leadership is essential if we are to keep offering every child an opportunity to learn and succeed. NASSP urges the committee to put this leadership in place by confirming nominee Cardona in the fastest manner possible.

Thank you for your consideration, and your continued support of our nation’s children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ronn Nozoe', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Ronn Nozoe  
CEO, NASSP