



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

**RE: Response to Girls Inc. Grassroots Petition to Prioritize the Needs of Girls**

Dear Girls Inc. and Advocates:

Thank you for your letter, and for your recommendations on policy priorities that center the well-being of girls, particularly girls of color and girls from underserved communities. We echo your commitment to education free from sexual violence, education free from discriminatory discipline policies, and access to mental health care for all young people.

The Biden-Harris Administration is deeply committed to gender equity and gender equality, including addressing the unique barriers faced by girls. As you know, in his first 100 days, President Biden signed two important Executive Orders in alignment with that commitment. The first established the White House Gender Policy Council to ensure that the Biden-Harris Administration advances gender equity and equal rights and opportunity for women and girls. The second directed the Department of Education (ED) to review all of its existing regulations, orders, guidance, and policies for consistency with the Administration's policy to guarantee education free from sexual violence.

The White House Gender Policy Council also works in close alignment with the Domestic Policy Council in implementing Executive Order 13985—Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government—and building a more equitable and just society for all Americans. We will aggressively protect the rights and needs of those who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including girls who are Black, Latina, Native, Asian American and Pacific Islander, girls with disabilities, girls from underserved communities, and LGBTQ+ girls.

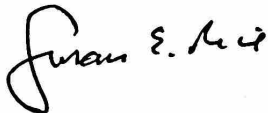
Regarding the specific policy priorities in your petition:

- **Title IX:** It is the policy of this Administration that all students should be guaranteed an educational environment free from discrimination on the basis of sex, including discrimination in the form of sexual harassment, which encompasses sexual violence, and including discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. In accordance with the aforementioned Executive Order, Secretary Cardona and the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the Department of Education launched a comprehensive review of Title IX regulations. The Department kicked off this process through a week-long hearing of public comments, where the Department of Education heard directly from interested persons, including advocates, allies, students and survivors. In addition, this month the Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Education issued a Notice of Interpretation clarifying the Administration's enforcement authority over discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity under Title IX, consistent with the Supreme Court's decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, issued one year ago this week.

- **School Discipline:** This Administration is committed to equity, as exemplified by the day one Executive Order to advance equity for all. The serious issues you raise concerning biases and disparities in disciplinary actions in schools are precisely the types of issues President Biden has directed the federal government to redress. Earlier this month the Education Department announced plans to revisit the issue of school discipline and explore policy options that promote students' safety through "fair and nondiscriminatory school discipline." The Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Education is currently requesting comments about the administration of school discipline and recommendations for guidance schools need to address discriminatory school discipline practices and to support positive school climates. We encourage Girls Inc. affiliates, girls and advocates to submit their recommendations through the Request for Information process. Comments will be received through to July 23, 2021.
- **Mental Health:** The administration is focused on improving and expanding access to mental health treatment, particularly for underserved communities. We are working to increase the resources available to states and local communities to implement prevention programs, reduce barriers to treatment, and support recovery. This includes funding for schools to support the social and emotional needs of their students, as well as for supporting community-based programs that address trauma and reduce risk for suicide. The President's American Rescue Plan gives schools the resources they need to hire social workers and counselors and invest in other strategies that support the mental health and social and emotional health needs and development of students.

We share in your vision of a country and world where all girls can thrive, free from structural and systemic barriers, and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Susan Rice, Assistant to the President and Domestic Policy Advisor



Jennifer Klein, Deputy Assistant to the President and Co-Chair of the White House Gender Policy Council