

**From:** sanjana  
**Sent:** Fri, 11 Jun 2021 11:04:21 -0500  
**To:** T9PublicHearing  
**Subject:** Title IX Comment

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.**

For context, I am a recent graduate of public high school.

First of all, I would like to say the current definition of what constitutes sexual harassment is extremely harmful. “Severe and pervasive” harassment is entirely up to interpretation. It also suggests that harassment that occurs once or twice isn’t enough. Why do students have to face constant abuse for people in power to care? Does the federal government understand how deeply traumatizing even one instance of harassment can be?

In addition, Title IX should be enforced regardless of where the harassment occurred. If someone has to attend school with their harasser—that is a hindrance to their education.

Also, the previous 60 day limit for investigation ensured that survivors could be accommodated quickly. The removal of this timeline forces survivors to undergo long and burdensome processes which further traumatize them. In my experience, schools care deeply about their public image at the expense of students and their safety. If they can make investigations long, they can make sure nothing ever comes to fruition. For instance, a high school student like I was cannot balance classes, college applications, and familial obligations all while trying to push my school to continue my investigation.

Now, I’d like to focus on K-12 specific changes. They’re often forgotten—K-12 students have little say in what happens to them; they can’t even vote for the school board that sets policy.

At my school, the Title IX coordinator was our assistant principal. He was also responsible for disciplining students. How are students supposed to trust a disciplinarian with their private sexual harassment concerns? At the district level, the coordinator was also the Director of Athletics. Doesn’t his other position create a conflict of interest? This is the case at most K-12 schools: The Title IX coordinator has other positions.

This also has other implications. A student I know filed an FOIA request with our district to find out about the average length of Title IX investigations, among other things. After weeks of delay from the district, the response was: this information is not collected. This shows that our Coordinators, mainly because of their other roles, carelessly ignored such vital information. Thus, the Department must require school districts to hire someone for the explicit role of a Title IX Coordinator.

In addition, the Department should require schools to provide confidential, free mental health

care to survivors. Survivors who cannot deal with trauma can't perform well at school. And students should have the option to seek free counseling outside of the school. Many students do not feel safe seeing guidance/academic counselors, who also write letters of recommendation for them for college.

Finally, I ask what the Department of Education is going to do to ensure K-12 students know their rights. I'm often the first person to introduce my friends to Title IX. I have friends who say that, had they known their rights under Title IX, they would have been able to ask their schools to give them accommodations. Because a lot of times, students can't rely on parents or administrators. I know, for instance, my principal said that schools cannot investigate Title IX complaints if law enforcement is involved, which is false. This was categorically untrue. It's very easy to apply rules at the federal level. But the Department should be responsible for how that enforcement and information get to students.

Thank you