



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

March 5, 2025

Lewis D. Ferebee  
Chancellor  
District of Columbia Public Schools

*sent via E-mail only to [lewis.ferebee@k12.dc.gov](mailto:lewis.ferebee@k12.dc.gov)*

OCR Case Number 11-25-5901

Dear Mr. Ferebee:

The United States Department of Education's (Department) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) writes to inform you that it is initiating a directed investigation of the District of Columbia Public Schools (the District).

According to a [December 2024 Report of the District of Columbia Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights](#), "data shows that the District of Columbia has historically received significantly more complaints per 10,000 students in the special education area ... than any other state or territory in the United States." The report also found that the District's "dispute resolution system places the burden of accessing special education services on students and their families," and the "high rate of due process complaints warrants serious attention to explore why families are suing for services that they are entitled to." Additionally, the report states that the District's current transportation system for special education students poses significant burdens, including long delays, unreliable schedules, and lax oversight.

Pursuant to its regulatory authority, as set forth in 34 C.F.R. § 104.61, OCR will initiate an investigation whenever a report, complaint, or other information indicates a possible failure to comply with the laws and regulations enforced by OCR.

OCR enforces Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), 29 U.S.C. § 794, and its implementing regulation at 34 C.F.R. Part 104, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. OCR also enforces Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title II), 42 U.S.C. §§ 12131 *et seq.*, and its implementing regulation at 28 C.F.R. Part 35, which prohibit discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities by public entities, including public education systems and institutions, regardless of whether they receive federal

financial assistance.

OCR's directed investigation will examine whether the District is failing to evaluate or reevaluate, in an individualized manner, students who need or are believed to need appropriate special education or related services, in violation of Section 504 and Title II, and whether this failure results in parents/guardians having to rely on due process complaints to receive appropriate special education or related services to which their children are entitled. OCR will also investigate whether the District's current transportation system results in a denial of a free and appropriate education for students with disabilities. OCR's initiation of a directed investigation is not itself evidence of a violation of Federal civil rights laws and regulations.

The OCR Metro regional office will conduct this directed investigation. OCR will contact District officials within a week of the date of this letter to arrange for the next steps in the investigation, including requesting access to data and personnel.

Sincerely,

/s/

Craig Trainor  
Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
United States Department of Education