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Congress of the United States
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May 3, 2017

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos,

In March, I sent you a letter requesting that the Office for Civil Rights in the Department of Education investigate all documented disparities in the treatment of students who attend public schools in Virginia's Fourth Congressional District. I have not yet received a response, other than to confirm receipt of my request; I would like to reiterate that original request, and to know its status.

I was pleased to see an announcement on April 17 that OCR is investigating allegations that Richmond Public Schools' disciplinary practices discriminate against African-American students and students with disabilities. Although this investigation is a positive step towards resolving some of the issues I raised, I have concerns about its limited scope. As I explained in my original letter, there are also documented disparities at other public school systems within my district.

As I stated previously, I have grave concerns about disproportionately high suspension rates for African-American students and students with disabilities. This has been an important issue for me since my tenure in the Virginia General Assembly. Mistreatment of students is utterly unacceptable, and the federal government has a unique role and responsibility to address and help correct such injustices. All students deserve to be treated equally and fairly.

Again, I repeat my request that the Office for Civil Rights in the Department of Education investigate all documented disparities in the public schools of Virginia's Fourth Congressional District — whether by expanding the announced investigation, or by beginning an additional one.

I appreciate your consideration, and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "A. Donald McEachin".

A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress, VA-04