

# RALIANCE

Ending Sexual Violence in One Generation

## **Raliance Statement on Department of Education Guidance on Sexual Misconduct**

September 22, 2017

The Department of Education's interim guidance on campuses responding to sexual misconduct is a disheartening step backwards that emboldens victim-blaming attitudes and behaviors, fails survivors and parents, and will render our schools less safe.

The research is clear that campus sexual assault is widespread and devastating. Numerous studies have found that 1 in 5 women and 1 in 16 men will experience sexual assault while in college. Prior to the Department's 2011 "Dear Colleague" letter, victims were frequently overlooked and campus sexual assault lived largely in the shadows. As a society, we were accustomed to allowing student survivors to bear the brunt of the emotional, financial and social costs of having their educational experience marred by sexual violence. Now, there is no doubt that millions of individuals throughout the country, especially students, have benefited from Title IX's important protections against gender discrimination in education.

Title IX is clear that educational institutions have a responsibility to prevent the things that create hostile environments, including sexual violence. Given the widespread prevalence of sexual violence among high school and college aged students, it is unthinkable for any institution to abandon this responsibility. We call on federal, state and local policymakers to hold institutions accountable for their campus culture and strengthen systemic responses to sexual assault, and we commend the universities and schools who are reaffirming their strong commitment to addressing and preventing sexual violence.

We want survivors, parents, and schools to know that as advocates, we won't go backward. We stand with every survivor, and we will continue to fight for the policies, culture, and safe communities they need to heal and thrive. All students have the right to an education free from sexual violence. Together, we can build a world in which that right becomes a reality.