



# COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

STRENGTHENING THE PROFESSION OF SOCIAL WORK

*Leadership in Research, Career Advancement, and Education*

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Alex M. Azar II  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

October 29, 2018

Dear Secretary Azar:

I am writing on behalf of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) regarding the reported intention of the Trump Administration to establish a definition of *gender* under Title IX. The proposed definition would define *gender* as an unchangeable biological condition determined by genitalia at birth. This attempt to erase protections for transgender people is an affront and an assault on civil rights. The Administration's claim that this decision is grounded in and motivated by science is also troubling.

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. This includes gender identity and expression. This proposed change will affect not only social work faculty, staff, and students, but also the communities that social workers serve, especially as the proposal relates to civil rights protections in health care. Trans individuals already face significant health disparities; this proposed change would only exacerbate those challenges. CSWE adamantly opposes this initiative by the Administration and requests that this effort be terminated.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Darla Spence Coffey'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Darla Spence Coffey, PhD, MSW  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Council on Social Work Education