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***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

UAW RESPONDS TO TRUMP ADMINISTRATION’S PLANS TO WEAKEN TITLE IX PROTECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND HIGHER ED WORKERS WHO EXPERIENCE SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

Berkeley, CA – Today, on behalf of UAW higher education local unions that represent Postdoctoral Scholars and Academic Researchers (UAW 5810) and Academic Student Employees (UAW 2865) at the University of California, at the California State University system (UAW 4123), and at the University of Washington (UAW 4121), International Union UAW submitted comments expressing their opposition to the Department of Education’s plans to weaken protections against sexual assault and harassment (also known as Title IX protections), which were released on November 16, 2018.

In particular, UAW detailed concerns that the proposed changes would:

- Narrow the definition of sexual harassment so institutions would take action on fewer cases;
- Make it more difficult to find perpetrators of sexual assault and harassment guilty by allowing schools to adopt higher standards of proof than currently in place; and
- Subject survivors to painful and traumatic hearings that will likely decrease the (already low) reporting rate.

Many studies have found widespread sexual harassment and discrimination in academia, and that it is a major contributor to the persistent loss of women and people of color, especially in STEM fields. Half of women in science have experienced harassment or assault, according to a 2018 study by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

“At the same time the #MeToo movement is exposing just how widespread of a problem pervasive sexual harassment is, the Trump Administration is trying to dismantle Title IX protections that fight against gender discrimination in education. Not only are they undermining federal law, but they are also doing a disservice to our institutions of higher education and society as a whole. Survivors who cannot turn to their employer are often forced to choose between enduring the abuse or leaving their field altogether – which is detrimental to research efforts and contributes to the persistent ‘gender gap’ in academia. We will continue speaking out against these terrible policies, and urging our elected officials to oppose these attacks on equality in education,” said Sam Sumpter, a graduate student in Philosophy at the University of Washington.

“Our UC Postdoc and Academic Student Employee contracts provide important recourse against sexual harassment, including strict timelines for resolving claims and protections for survivors so they can continue their work in a safe environment. Betsy DeVos’ Department of Education wants to weaken Title IX protections, making it harder for survivors to access justice, and disproportionately harming women of color and LGBTQ students, who are at the highest risk of sexual violence. Academic Workers need more tools, not fewer, to finally end this crisis and the power imbalance that has enabled these harassers to thrive in our institutions,” said Anke Schennink, the President of UAW Local 5810 and a former UC Davis Postdoc in Animal Science.

The regulations have not yet gone into effect, and the public can provide feedback on the rules until January 30, 2019.

In the U.S., UAW represents 80,000 academic employees at more than 40 universities and colleges nationwide, including over 24,000 academic employees at the University of California and over 6,000 academic employees at the University of Washington, 10,000 academic employees at the California State University, as well as academic employees at Columbia
University, NYU, Harvard University and the University of Massachusetts.

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