

# The Negative Impacts of Eliminating Section 504 on Students with Disabilities

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## **Background:**

A high-stakes lawsuit, [Texas v. Becerra](#), is currently making its way through the courts, threatening crucial protections for people with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Seventeen states have challenged the federal government's updated rules, putting at risk decades of legal safeguards that ensure accessibility in education, healthcare, and other public services.

In this case, a coalition of 17 states (Alaska, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and West Virginia) has sued the U.S. government, arguing that Section 504 is unconstitutional and should be eliminated. If successful, the lawsuit could dismantle essential protections that prevent discrimination against people with disabilities.

## **Introduction**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a critical piece of civil rights legislation that protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. It ensures that students with disabilities have equal access to education by requiring schools to provide accommodations and services tailored to their needs. If Section 504 were to be eliminated, the consequences would be far-reaching, affecting millions of students with disabilities, their families, and the educational system as a whole. This paper explores the negative implications of removing Section 504, including the loss of legal protections, reduced educational opportunities, increased disparities, and broader societal consequences.

## **Transition to the Body**

The elimination of Section 504 would create significant barriers for students with disabilities, undermining decades of progress in inclusive education. Without this law, schools would no longer be required to provide reasonable accommodations, leaving many students without the support they need to succeed. The following sections will discuss the specific negative impacts in greater detail, focusing on educational access, legal protections, and social equity.

## **Negative Impacts of Eliminating Section 504**

## ***1. Loss of Legal Protections for Students with Disabilities***

One of the most immediate consequences of eliminating Section 504 would be the loss of a legal framework that guarantees equal access to education for students with disabilities. Currently, Section 504 ensures that students receive necessary accommodations, such as extended test time, assistive technology, and modifications to curriculum delivery. Without this protection, many students would face significant obstacles, potentially leading to increased dropout rates and lower academic achievement (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2023).

## ***2. Reduced Educational Opportunities***

Section 504 enables students with disabilities to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. If it were eliminated, schools might not be required to provide accommodations, leading to a lack of access to essential resources. Students with disabilities would be at a higher risk of being placed in inappropriate educational settings or being denied access to advanced coursework, extracurricular activities, and college preparatory programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

## ***3. Increased Educational Disparities***

The removal of Section 504 would widen the educational gap between students with disabilities and their peers. Many students with disabilities already face challenges in the classroom, and without legally mandated accommodations, they would be further marginalized. This would particularly impact students from low-income backgrounds who rely on federally mandated services to access an equitable education (American Educational Research Association, 2023).

## ***4. Negative Societal and Economic Consequences***

Beyond education, eliminating Section 504 would have broader societal consequences. Students with disabilities who do not receive appropriate support are less likely to graduate, pursue higher education, or secure stable employment. This would lead to higher unemployment rates among individuals with disabilities, increased reliance on public assistance programs, and overall economic losses. Additionally, the lack of educational support could exacerbate mental health challenges, leading to increased healthcare costs and reduced quality of life (National Disability Rights Network, 2023).

## Conclusion

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act plays a vital role in ensuring equal access to education for students with disabilities. Eliminating this critical legislation would lead to severe consequences, including the loss of legal protections, reduced educational opportunities, increased disparities, and negative economic and societal impacts. The law is fundamental to promoting inclusivity, equity, and opportunity for all students, regardless of their abilities. Maintaining and strengthening Section 504 is essential to ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive the education and support they need to thrive.

## References

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