



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Education
& Early Development

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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February 17, 2025

MEMORANDUM

Subject: Urgent Compliance Guidance on Title VI and Recent Supreme Court Decision

Dear Superintendents,

I am writing to share important guidance received from the U.S. Department of Education setting forth its position regarding the nondiscrimination obligations of schools that receive federal financial assistance. The federal Department explains its position regarding those obligations pursuant to Title VI, the United States Constitution, and the Supreme Court's decision in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*, in the attached *Dear Colleague Letter* dated February 14, 2025. This is a time-sensitive matter, as the federal Department asserts that it will begin assessing compliance with these regulations starting February 28.

I want to reaffirm our collective commitment to ensuring that every student in Alaska receives an education free from discrimination. As superintendents, we have a responsibility to uphold fairness and equal opportunity for all students. This is a long-standing principle. As the Governor noted recently on Elizabeth Peratrovich Day, Alaska enacted the first anti-discrimination law of its kind in the United States.

The *Dear Colleague Letter* notes that it does not have the force and effect of law or create new legal standards, but it does provide guidance on how the federal Department interprets the existing anti-discrimination laws. While additional legal guidance is forthcoming, our immediate responsibility is to ensure compliance with these directives. I encourage you to review carefully the specific advice the federal government has set out for educational institutions in the *Dear Colleague Letter* to:

1. review district policies to “ensure that [the] policies and actions comply with existing civil rights law.”
2. “cease all efforts to circumvent prohibitions on the use of race by relying on proxies or other indirect means to accomplish such ends.”

3. “cease all reliance on third-party contractors, clearinghouses, or aggregators” that could be used “to circumvent prohibited uses of race.”

Failure to comply may result in enforcement actions, including the loss of federal funding. As always, individuals concerned about unlawful discrimination may file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights. DEED will continue to share updates as we receive further guidance.

Thank you for your leadership and dedication to providing a high-quality, learning environment for Alaska’s students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deena M. Bishop", with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Deena M. Bishop Ed.D.
Commissioner