



## STATE OF WASHINGTON

September 16, 2019

Dear School Administrator:

For too many Washington students, the excitement about the new school year is dampened by fear that their immigrant parents may not be home when they return at the end of the day. The national discourse around immigrants and the corresponding increase in raids and removals is causing anxiety and trauma in undocumented children and children from mixed-status families. It is difficult enough to navigate coursework and social development without also having to worry about the well-being of your loved ones. This emotional stress can harm a student's ability to learn, focus, or interact positively with their peers.

That is why the three of us are standing together to make clear that all students, regardless of immigration status, are not only welcome in our state, but have a right to be educated. The Washington State Constitution proclaims that it is our paramount duty to educate every child who resides within our borders; the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that all children in the United States, *all children*, are entitled to a free public education; and the Keep Washington Working Act requires that our educational services be available to all students.

Despite these state and federal protections, we are prepared for the possibility that federal agents may detain or remove someone close to a student. Knowing that many of our students and their families may be experiencing higher levels of anxiety means that we all have a responsibility to think about how to ensure that students receive the support they need to continue learning. Although painful to discuss, schools can help families create emergency preparedness plans. For example, the Office of the Attorney General has published guidance recommending that schools designate a staff person to coordinate with service providers and share the Immigrant Safety Plan for Youth and Children.

In addition, the Washington State Attorney General's Office is working with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and other key stakeholders to draft model policies regarding immigration enforcement at public schools. The model policies will be published when finalized.

Constitutionally and morally, our responsibility is clear, and we ask our communities to join us in this endeavor. The enclosed resources can help us work together to support our immigrant families and help all Washington children keep their focus on learning.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jay Inslee in blue ink.

Jay Inslee  
Governor

Handwritten signature of Bob Ferguson in blue ink.

Bob Ferguson  
Attorney General

Handwritten signature of Chris Reykdal in blue ink.

Chris Reykdal  
Superintendent of Public  
Instruction

Enclosure

## Resources

- [Immigrant Safety Plan for Youth and Children](#)
- [Washington Education Association's webpage on immigrant rights](#)
- [Guidance from the Office of the Attorney General](#)
- [OSPI webpage on immigrant students' rights to attend public schools](#)
- [Guidelines on prohibiting discrimination in Washington public schools](#)
- [Guidelines for protecting student data privacy](#)
- [Keep Washington Working Act, Laws of 2019, ch. 440](#)
- [Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)