

## **Healey advises schools to educate students regardless of immigration status**

Boston Globe - Boston, Mass.

Subjects: Public schools; Immigration policy; Citizenship; Secondary education; Students; Children & youth; Elementary schools; Gender identity; Education; Aliens; Gays & lesbians; Transgender persons

Author: Johnson, Akilah

Date: Mar 1, 2017

Start Page: B.1

Section: Metro

### **Document Text**

Attorney General Maura Healey issued an advisory Thursday, reminding school districts statewide that children have a right to primary and secondary education regardless of immigration status.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education plans to distribute the three-page advisory this week to the more than 500 school districts, charter schools, and education collaboratives in the state, Healey's office said.

Healey's advisory comes as several school departments, alarmed by President Trump's hostile stances, have sought to reassure their communities that protections remain in place for immigrant and transgender students in Massachusetts. Officials from at least eight cities and towns -- as well as the state's Education Department -- have sent letters home to parents or posted statements after Trump moved to restrict immigration and limit protections for transgender students.

"In light of the current climate around matters of immigration, parents should not be afraid to send their children to school," said Healey, a Democrat who has spoken out forcefully against the policies and orders of Trump's nascent administration, in a statement. "In Massachusetts and across this country, we open our schools to all children because that is how we build a productive, educated, and safe society."

The advisory said state and federal laws guarantee every child "equal access to public education -- irrespective of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or immigration status." Children are protected under the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and by state laws that prohibit bullying and discrimination, according to the advisory, which also points to a 1982 Supreme Court ruling that says states cannot constitutionally deny students a free public education on account of immigration status.

This case "made clear that a child's immigration or citizenship status (or that of his or her parent or guardian) is not relevant to the child's right to a public education," said the advisory. "Enrollment practices that single out students based on their actual or perceived citizenship or immigration status violate state and federal law."

This is not the first time state education officials have pushed back against the White House.

Last week, Trump's administration ordered schools nationwide to disregard guidance from the previous administration regarding the rights of transgender students. The next day, Mitchell Chester, Massachusetts' commissioner of elementary and secondary education, wrote a letter to state school officials.

In it, Chester said, he "would like to affirm for you that Massachusetts remains dedicated to protecting the rights of transgender students even in light of recent federal actions."

On Thursday, Chester reiterated the state's commitment to all students, saying in a statement: "Educating and supporting all students strengthens our communities and our Commonwealth as a whole."

The advisory provides three bullet points for what school leaders statewide must do: 1) allow all students to attend; 2) avoid asking for information that might discourage or deny access based on race, national origin, or immigration or citizenship status; and 3) protect all students from bullying and harassment.

Akilah Johnson can be reached at [akilah.johnson@globe.com](mailto:akilah.johnson@globe.com). Follow her on Twitter @akjohnson1922.

Credit: By Akilah Johnson Globe Staff

Caption: Attorney General Maura Healey's advisory came as several school departments have sought to reassure their communities that protections remain in place for immigrant and transgender students.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

### **Abstract (Document Summary)**

The advisory said state and federal laws guarantee every child "equal access to public education -- irrespective of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or immigration status." Children are protected under the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and by state laws that prohibit bullying and discrimination, according to the advisory, which also points to a 1982 Supreme Court ruling that says states cannot constitutionally deny students a free public...

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

## Schools dig in against Trump

*Support transgender students, immigrants*

Boston Globe - Boston, Mass.

Subjects: Public schools; Immigration policy; Students; Web sites; Gays & lesbians; Transgender persons; Community; Executive orders; Leadership; Education; Gender identity; State laws; Aliens; School districts

Author: Johnson, Akilah

Date: Feb 28, 2017

Start Page: A.1

Section: Metro

### Document Text

Alarmed by President Trump's increasingly hostile stances, several local school departments have sought to reassure parents, students, and teachers that protections remain in place for immigrant and transgender students.

School officials from at least seven cities and towns -- as well as the state Education Department -- have sent letters home to parents or posted statements in the last several weeks, after Trump's moves to restrict immigration and limit protections for transgender students.

In Needham, Superintendent Dan Gutekanst welcomed high school students back from February break this week with a statement noting that "collectively these actions and pronouncements impact us all by sending a message that an individual is not welcome or wanted."

"And that," Gutekanst wrote, "is simply unacceptable."

Letters have gone out from Revere, Brookline, Lexington, Boston, and other communities, starting last month, days after Trump's first executive order restricted travel from seven Muslim-majority nations. The letters continued as the administration moved aggressively to deport those in the country illegally. More messages came after the president revoked federal guidelines specifying that transgender students have the right to use public school restrooms that match their gender identity.

Some Massachusetts school leaders point to a 1982 Supreme Court ruling in their letters, saying, "states cannot constitutionally deny students a free public education on account of their immigration status." Some of the letters are written in several languages, owing to the highly diverse makeup of the student bodies in Greater Boston.

"We recognize the uneasiness and isolation many of you are experiencing due to the current political climate," Mayor Brian Arrigo of Revere, who is also chairman of the School Committee, and Superintendent Dianne K. Kelly wrote in a Jan. 30 letter that was written in Spanish, Arabic, and English. "One of the ways we have measured our schools' success has been by assessing how safe, welcomed, and included ALL of our students and families feel. This will not change."

Brookline Public Schools began its Feb. 3 letter by quoting James Baldwin, the celebrated black author, essayist, and social critic: "We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist."

The broad, vehement backlash from states and individual school districts recalls the resistance to public school desegregation in the 1960s, said Preston Green, a professor of educational leadership and law at the University of Connecticut.

In that era, there was a "massive resistance" in Southern states and elsewhere to keep schools segregated.

"It's ironic," he said. "It's now the Northeast and people pushing for inclusion who are now pushing against the federal government. In fact, you're seeing the term 'the resistance' being used against the current administration, and this is the educational component of it."

The day after Trump's administration issued a letter ordering schools nationwide to disregard orders from the previous administration regarding the rights of transgender students, Mitchell Chester, Massachusetts' commissioner of elementary and secondary education, wrote a letter to state school officials. He said that he "would like to affirm for you that Massachusetts remains dedicated to protecting the rights of transgender students even in light of recent federal actions."

"No one should be discriminated against based on their gender identity, and under existing state statute and regulations, protections for students and families will remain in place in the Commonwealth," he wrote to superintendents, charter school leaders, and principals.

Chelsea Public Schools posted Chester's letter to its website.

Governor Charlie Baker, a Republican, echoed Chester's comments, saying last week that he was disappointed with the Trump administration's move and reaffirming that students in Massachusetts "are going to be protected."

Under a Massachusetts law that went into effect last year, transgender people are permitted use of restrooms or locker rooms that correspond with their gender identities. The Trump administration's guidance leaves such discretion up to local lawmakers, US Attorney General Jeff Sessions wrote in a statement.

In Lexington, Superintendent Mary Czajkowski wrote that "it has not been my practice to comment on political events or share my own perspective on such matters."

But that changed with Trump's executive order restricting immigration, she wrote.

"I feel it is important for me to emphasize again, that everyone belongs in Lexington Public Schools," she said in a Jan. 31 letter. "Regardless of language, race, ethnic background, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, national origin, immigrant status, and any other manner in which individuals may identify -- Lexington Public Schools remains fully committed to safety, equality and inclusivity for all."

Trump's order on immigration has been halted by the courts. He is expected to issue a new order Wednesday.

Explaining their correspondence to students, parents, and staff, the Brookline Public School Committee and Superintendent Andrew Bott said in a letter that they felt it "important to reiterate our policies and practices" as "critical national issues related to education emerge."

"We acknowledge that this is a frightening and uncertain time for some of our community members, and we want to affirm that all students and families are valued, welcome, and important members of our inclusive and pluralistic community," said the letter.

School officials in Cambridge issued two separate letters -- one after the administration's immigration ban, and another after federal protections for transgender students was revoked -- telling Cambridge students and staff that they are valued and supported. Both letters provide resources for families with questions or concerns.

The district also plans to hold two "Know Your Rights" seminars in collaboration with the Cambridge Human Rights Commission and Cambridge Commission on Immigration Rights and Citizenship.

"Bigotry and intolerance have no place within Cambridge Public Schools' educational environment and workplace," Superintendent Kenneth Salim wrote in a letter posted to the district's website on Saturday.

And Boston Public Schools created its own website, BPS: We Dream Together, that offers information on immigration in 15 languages.

"BPS stands in solidarity with all of you!," Superintendent Tommy Chang wrote in a "Letter to the BPS Community" posted on the website.

He also issued a statement Thursday, the day after federal transgender protections were rescinded, saying that "transgender and gender nonconforming students" in Boston "will remain protected from discrimination, bullying, and harassment."

The stance that the state and school districts are taking is not insignificant, said Green, the UConn professor.

"It's a very big deal," he said. "They are speaking out, in their positions as citizens and as employees. They are taking major stands by making these statements."

Akilah Johnson can be reached at [akilah.johnson@globe.com](mailto:akilah.johnson@globe.com). Follow her on Twitter @akjohnson1922.

Credit: By Akilah Johnson Globe Staff

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

### **Abstract (Document Summary)**

School officials from at least seven cities and towns -- as well as the state Education Department -- have sent letters home to parents or posted statements in the last several weeks, after Trump's moves to restrict immigration and limit protections for transgender students. More messages came after the president revoked federal guidelines specifying that transgender students have the right to use public school restrooms that match their gender identity. The broad, vehement backlash from states and individual school districts recalls the resistance to public school desegregation in the 1960s, said Preston Green, a professor of educational leadership and law at the University of Connecticut. [...]you're seeing the term 'the resistance' being used against the current administration, and this is the educational component of it." The day after Trump's administration issued a letter ordering schools nationwide to disregard orders from the previous administration regarding the rights of transgender students, Mitchell Chester, Massachusetts' commissioner of elementary and secondary education, wrote a letter to state school officials.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.