



State of Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities

Central Office – 450 Columbus Blvd Ste 2, Hartford CT 06103

Promoting Equality and Justice for all People



October 20, 2021

High School Principal,
Superintendent
PTA/PTO President

Dear Colleague:

This letter is to provide an update to the Dear Colleague letters the CHRO issued on February 22, 2011. We are pleased to be joined on this letter by the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity (CWCSEO), which serves as a public information and education partner is ensuring that our schools are a safe and welcoming teaching and learning environment for all.

The purpose of this letter is to remind you that, in addition to being a Federal Civil Rights violation, harassment and bullying on the basis of race, color, religion or creed, national origin, ancestry, sex, marital status, age, lawful source of income, intellectual, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or gender identity or expression constitute a violation of Connecticut laws. As “places of public accommodation,” public schools have an affirmative obligation to prevent and respond to harassment and bullying that is based on the protected class of the victim. As parents, teachers, and school administrators, you have both the ability and obligation to prevent bullying and to eliminate its harmful effects.

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO), along with the State Department of Education, has concurrent jurisdiction over complaints of discrimination based on the protected classes listed above. While Connecticut law is co-extensive with Federal law in many respects, Connecticut law often provides more protections to individuals than may be available under the Federal law. Failure to address harassment or bullying based on the protected classes listed above can lead to liability for the school district and result in damages being assessed on the school district or organization that knows about but fails to act to prevent or stop said conduct. Under Connecticut law, these complaints can be brought before the CHRO and the State Board of Education in addition to the United States Department of Justice for federal issues. Failure to appropriately respond to complaints of this kind can be costly for communities and schools.

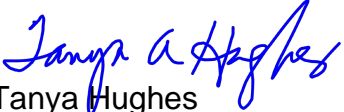
The October 26, 2010 Federal “Dear Colleague” letter¹ provides guidance from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights about the types of harassment and bullying

¹ Russlynn Ali, Assistant Secretary of Education for Civil Rights, Dear Colleague Letter (Oct. 26, 2010), available at [Dear Colleague Letter from Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Russlynn Ali.-- Pg 1 \(ed.gov\)](#).

that can rise to a Civil Rights violation. It is an excellent resource for schools to use in responding to harassment and bullying and to prevent the behavior before it starts.

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities is available to assist you in obtaining training and resources that you may need to respond to these complaints. We are also available to provide training to your staff. Additionally, the CWCSEO is eager to assist you in any way through public information sessions, civic discussions, and resource advocacy. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Very truly yours,


Tanya Hughes
CHRO Executive Director


Attorney Cheryl A. Sharp
CHRO Deputy Director


Attorney Steven Hernandez
CWCSEO Executive Director

