



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



April 15, 2025

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

United States Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights
Washington DC, 20202
ocr@ed.gov

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing on behalf of the Connecticut State Department of Education ["CSDE"] in response to the "Reminder of Legal Obligations" dated April 3, 2025, ["Reminder"] received from the U.S. Department of Education ["USDOE"], which included a new certification of compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ["Title VI"].

Connecticut remains committed to safeguarding Connecticut students against the insidious effects of discrimination and continues to align its principles and programs with the requirements and purpose of Title VI, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin. The CSDE regularly reaffirms this commitment in applications certifying compliance with all assurances required for federal programs, in response to which the USDOE has provided the pertinent federal funds.

For example, the USDOE accepted the CSDE's single set of assurances, certifying compliance with Title VI and other enumerated federal laws, that were required as part of the *Consolidated State Plan Under the Every Student Succeeds Act* to continue receiving federal education funding. The USDOE has since continued to provide the CSDE with these federal funds, demonstrating the USDOE's determination that the CSDE is fully compliant with required certifications. The CSDE has been faithfully implementing education programs in accordance with all federal laws, including antidiscrimination laws, and will continue to do so.

While the Reminder states that "Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion ("DEI") programs" and "certain DEI practices" may violate federal law, it does not define those terms, and the CSDE is unaware of any federal or state statutes prohibiting diversity, equity, or inclusion. Indeed, the USDOE itself has long supported these important principles. In 2020, the USDOE's former Secretary of Education stated that "...embracing diversity and inclusion are key elements for success."¹ To the extent that the USDOE may believe specific activities related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in K-12 schools could potentially violate Title VI, we would anticipate that the USDOE would provide notice and advisement of such activities through the regulatory rulemaking process.

¹Erica L. Green & Zach Montague, Trump Cracks Down on Diversity Initiatives Celebrated in His First Term, *N.Y. Times* (Feb. 14, 2025).

The e-mail accompanying the Reminder also requested that the CSDE, “[w]ithin ten (10) days... report the signature status for each of your LEAs [or “Local Education Agencies”], any compliance issues found within your LEAs, and your proposed enforcement plans for those LEAs.” LEAs in Connecticut regularly certify their compliance with Title VI to the CSDE, in the manner required by its implementing regulations. The CSDE is unaware of any current legal authority for the USDOE to require State Education Agencies, or “SEAs” to additionally obtain certifications from LEAs in the form and manner requested by the Reminder, or to either report on compliance or propose enforcement plans in conformance with the Reminder.

In summary, the CSDE and Connecticut’s LEAs have provided the requisite certifications that assure our compliance with federal law and will continue to conform its activities and programs to the fundamental principles of antidiscrimination enshrined in Title VI and interpreted by the United States Supreme Court. As such, I submit this letter as the CSDE’s response to the Reminder.

Sincerely,



Charlene M. Russell-Tucker
Commissioner of Education