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California's Attorney General Is Asked to Take Action Against Enrollment Practices Denying Latino and Immigrant Students Their Right to Enroll in School

Some California school districts deter certain students from enrolling in school by inquiring about their citizenship status and/or requesting their Social Security Numbers.

Oakland – Today, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area (LCCR) and California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA) sent a letter to California's Attorney General Xavier Becerra requesting that he use the power of his office to investigate practices used by certain school districts that discriminatorily impact students and families based on their national origin by requiring immigration and citizenship information at enrollment. The letter urges the Attorney General to take all necessary action to ensure that school districts immediately cease these unlawful practices that have a chilling effect and discourage Latino and other students perceived to be immigrants, both documented and undocumented, from enrolling in school.

After an extensive review of school district websites and registration processes, CRLA and LCCR advocates uncovered 75 school districts from 35 counties that unlawfully inquire about a student's citizenship status or social security number during their registration process. One district even requires the student's immigration number if a student is not a U.S. citizen and asks if the student ever left the U.S. for any period of time since entering. "Asking about and collecting this information when parents are simply trying to enroll their children in school is clearly unlawful and creates fear, anxiety and can deter parents from enrolling their children in school," said Cynthia L. Rice, Director of Litigation, Advocacy & Training, at CRLA.

"We strongly urge Attorney General Becerra to use the full power of his office to ensure that school districts immediately stop these practices," said Deborah Escobedo, Senior Attorney, Racial Justice-Education, at LCCR. "It is in the best interest of the State and certainly of the children to encourage all children to enroll in and attend school. Fear about the family's immigration status should not obstruct a child's constitutional right to attend our public schools."



Many of the schools in question are acting against their own district policies. The letter demands that these schools be required to revise their websites and registration materials to eliminate any references to these illegal inquiries. All the identified districts are disregarding guidance letters issued by State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Torlakson, the U.S. Department of Education and a legal advisory issued by the California School Boards Association concerning the obligation of school districts with respect to immigrant student enrollment.

You can read the entire letter here (<http://www.crla.org/sites/all/files/u6/2017/pr/BecerraResCmplnt.pdf>)

Founded in 1966, CRLA's mission is to fight for justice and individual rights alongside the most exploited communities of our society. Through a network of regional offices and cross-cutting programs, CRLA provides legal services to over 43,000 low-income people annually. Our work impacts farmworkers, individuals with disabilities, immigrant populations, LGBT communities, women, children and families in rural areas. For more information on CRLA, please visit: www.crla.org.

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The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area, founded in 1968, works to advance, protect and promote the legal rights of communities of color, low-income persons, immigrants, and refugees. Assisted by hundreds of pro bono attorneys, LCCR provides free legal assistance and representation to individuals on civil legal matters through direct services, impact litigation and policy advocacy. For more information, please visit www.lccr.com.

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