



November 12, 2019

School District No. 43 (Coquitlam)  
550 Poirier Street  
Coquitlam, BC V3J 6A7

**Re: Sanctuary Schools Policy**

Dear Trustees,

We write in support of the sanctuary schools policy currently being considered for the School District No. 43 (Coquitlam) Board of Education. Schools should be a safe place for learning. We urge you to implement a policy that would ensure that all students who are resident in British Columbia have access to education, whether or not their parents have documented immigration status in Canada. The policy must also assure parents that their immigration status will not be disclosed to the Canadian Border Service Agency (“CBSA”) unless disclosure is legally compelled.

Access to education for children and youth under the age of 16 is both a right and requirement under provincial law. Section 82 of the *School Act* mandates the provision of free education to every student of school age who is ordinarily resident in the province. This requirement extends to all students ordinarily here and makes no distinction between students who are citizens and students without documented immigration status.

School staff and education officials are under no legal obligation to report violations of immigration law to border agents. BC’s *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (“FOIPPA”) sets out a presumption against disclosure of personal information collected by public bodies, and provides exemptions from this general obligation in only a limited range of circumstances.

To provide meaningful guidance to school officials, a sanctuary school’s policy should state that school officials have a positive duty not to disclose immigration-related information unless they are legally compelled to do so. The policy should also include a multilingual education component to assure parents that school officials will not share information with CBSA unless they are legally obligated to do so, and outline the circumstances in which such an obligation would arise.

To hear more about how a sanctuary schools policy would positively impact your community and to answer any outstanding questions you may have, we urge you meet with representatives of TriCities Amnesty International.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meghan McDermott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Meghan McDermott  
Acting Policy Director and Staff Counsel