



December 4, 2025

Arizona State Board of Education
1700 W. Washington Street
Executive Tower Suite #300
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Dear Members of the Arizona State Board of Education:

On behalf of the Arizona Education Association (AEA), which represents more than 22,000 educators across the state of Arizona, I am writing to express serious concern about the Arizona Department of Education (ADE)'s request to revise Arizona's Structured English Immersion (SEI) Endorsement Course Frameworks and Professional Teaching Standards to align with now-void directives in federal Executive Order 14151. ADE's proposals appear to rely on outdated information about the status of Executive Order 14151 and would create significant challenges for public school educators and students if adopted by the State Board of Education.

Legal Background and Enforceability of Executive Order 14151

In January 2025, the Trump administration issued Executive Order 14151, "Ending Radical And Wasteful Government DEI Programs And Preferencing"¹ and Executive Order 14190, "Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling,"² followed by a February 2025 Department of Education "Dear Colleague" directive³ and an April 2025 Certification Requirement⁴ indicating that the administration planned to take punitive action against educational institutions that maintained diversity, equity, and inclusion components within their curricula.

In response to these actions and out of concern for their impact on our students, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the National Education Association (NEA), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and other parties filed legal challenges that moved for preliminary relief to prevent the administration from taking punitive actions against educational institutions that maintain DEI programming.

By April 24, the date by which the Trump administration required state and local education agencies to certify their compliance with the "Dear Colleague" letter, three federal courts granted preliminary injunctive relief in favor of the plaintiffs, blocking the administration from carrying through with threats to withhold federal funding from entities that maintain DEI programming.⁵ Following these preliminary rulings, U.S. District Judge Stephanie Gallagher ruled in August 2025 that the Department of Education's "Dear Colleague" letter and the

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-and-wasteful-government-dei-programs-and-preferencing/>

² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-indoctrination-in-k-12-schooling/>

³ <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/dear-colleague-letter-sffa-v-harvard-109506.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/ed-requires-k-12-school-districts-certify-compliance-title-vi-and-students-v-harvard-condition-of-receiving-federal-financial-assistance>

⁵ https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.nhd.65138/gov.uscourts.nhd.65138.74.0_1.pdf;

<https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.mdd.577437/gov.uscourts.mdd.577437.60.0.pdf>;

<https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.dcd.279521/gov.uscourts.dcd.279521.31.0.pdf>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/24/us/trump-public-school-funds-dei.html>

certification requirement were unlawful by threatening to cut federal funding from educational institutions that continued with DEI initiatives.⁶ These rulings make plain that the Trump administration’s Department of Education does not have the authority to infringe on state and local decisions regarding educational curriculum and instruction. The rulings also mean that the Department cannot enforce the certification or withhold funding based on Executive Order 14151. As a result of these rulings, there is no longer an imminent risk to federal funding for Arizona schools if the ADE’s proposals related to Arizona’s Structured English Immersion (SEI) Endorsement Course Frameworks and Professional Teaching Standards are not adopted.

Concerns on the Merits of ADE’s Proposals

Moving beyond the now-moot concerns over the enforcement of Executive Order 14151, our organization objects to ADE’s DEI proposals on the merits because of the disruptive consequences they risk for the learning environment and the well-being of Arizona students.

Disruption to the Stability of State Education Standards

Arizona’s Structured English Immersion (SEI) Endorsement Course Frameworks and Professional Teaching Standards are complex documents that should be adapted based on pedagogical best practices that support student learning and achievement. If the State Board of Education moves to adopt ADE’s proposal, the body risks a cascading “race to the bottom” in which educational standards are regularly opened and revised to align with shifts in political priorities instead of the direct needs of Arizona students.

In recent years, Arizona educators have struggled to meet the shifting requirements of newly-implemented state mandates, many of which were enacted with no funding to support their implementation. As a result of these burdens and other strains on the teaching profession, ADE reports that more than 1,000 Arizona teachers have quit their jobs since the start of the 2025-2026 school year, with more than 4,200 positions filled temporarily.⁷ The haphazard adjustment of state teaching standards risks undermining years of preparation and professional development by expert Arizona educators and could exacerbate existing recruitment and retention issues within the profession. As the professional organization representing more than 22,000 public school educators throughout Arizona, we urge SBE to act carefully and judiciously when revising state teaching standards that affect millions of Arizona schoolchildren and the educators who support their growth.

Impact on Teaching Practices

Arizona is a profoundly diverse state, with 22 federally recognized tribes, more than 130,000 public school students with special needs,⁸ roughly 8,000 military-connected children,⁹ and more than 93,000 school-age English-language learners.¹⁰

In high-quality learning environments, educators are empowered to meet the unique needs of every child and understand how external factors may affect their day-to-day learning. ADE itself acknowledges these unique factors in a guide for educators teaching military children, in which it writes that “Arizona’s educators must understand military life in Arizona and how our educational systems can help.” In accordance with these principles, we urge SBE to maintain existing teaching and curriculum standards that acknowledge how every child — regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, or other characteristics — brings life experiences to the classroom that affect their style of learning.

⁶https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.mdd.577437/gov.uscourts.mdd.577437.83.0_2.pdf

⁷<https://www.azed.gov/communications/horne-releases-survey-showing-teacher-shortage-still-crisis-point>

⁸<https://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/2022/11/SEAP%20Trends%20%26%20Data%20Presentation.pdf>

⁹<https://www.azed.gov/teach/arizonas-military-community?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=2bd3b7dc-d084-4261-bbae-5301f23764b7>

¹⁰<http://migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/english-learners-k-12-education-state>

By adopting ADE's proposal and stripping existing policies of any references to diversity, equity, and inclusion, SBE risks endorsing a one-size-fits-all approach to education. When educators are empowered to consider the unique needs of every student — including their cultures, languages, and life experiences — we can design instruction and support that are genuinely meaningful, relevant, and accessible. Adopting ADE's proposal would signal a retreat from that powerful, student-centered pedagogy and weaken educators' ability to use their expert professional judgement to meet all learners where they are. As educators, we are entrusted to prepare students for a complex, interconnected world; by eliminating these frameworks, we risk reducing education to rote instruction, devoid of context and relevance.

Impact on Community Success and Future-Forward Vision

Good schools are built on trust between parents, students, staff, and the communities around them. The existing language in the Structured English Immersion (SEI) Endorsement Course Frameworks and Professional Teaching Standards signals to community members that all voices are valued, and encourages trust and investment in local public schools. Schools that embrace equity are better positioned to foster critical thinking, civic engagement, and social responsibility. These values benefit all students, and by extension, our broader community.

Impact on History and Civic Education

In addition to the issues outlined above, we are concerned about the potential chilling effect of adopting ADE's proposal. At the highest levels of government, efforts to comply with the Trump administration's DEI mandates have resulted in the removal of lessons on American heroes, including the Navajo Code Talkers, the Tuskegee Airmen,¹¹ and the Women's Airforce Service Pilots,¹² and the suspension of programming designed to prevent sexual assault.¹³ We are concerned that efforts to eliminate DEI programming within Arizona public schools could have similar unintended consequences — robbing Arizona students of their ability to learn the history of their state and nation and preventing important programming designed to keep them safe.

Given the profound consequences of disrupting Arizona's state teaching standards, we urge you to table the Arizona Department of Education's proposal and guard against further political interference in our public schools. If you have further questions about the Arizona Education Association's position on these issues, please reach out to Isela Blanc on my staff at Isela.Blanc@ArizonaEA.org.



Marisol Garcia
President
Arizona Education Association

¹¹ <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/20/nx-s1-5334461/pentagon-black-veterans-navajo-code-talkers-website-diversity>

¹² <https://apnews.com/article/trump-dei-tuskegee-airmen-women-war-history-88a92c8485281d7c088c5eafe5dbf002>

¹³ <https://www.defenseone.com/policy/2025/02/navy-pauses-sexual-assault-prevention-and-response-training/402829/>