

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

February 8, 2022

Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council
46 N Last Chance Gulch, Suite 2B
PO Box 200601
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Chairman Elder and CSPAC Members:

I write to comment on CSPAC's proposed revisions to the Montana Professional Educator Code of Ethics. As state education leaders, it is our responsibility to ensure students have access to the best educational opportunity available to them so they may learn, develop their unique gifts and talents, and achieve their full, outstanding potential. We owe that to our students. I believe that the current language in the educator code of ethics achieves that goal by recognizing that teachers must understand and respect the diverse needs of the students they serve.

Montana's schools do an excellent job of serving their diverse students, but better is always possible. I respect that you, as educators and administrators, are well-intentioned in trying to ensure that our state's teachers recognize and meet the needs of all Montana students with this updated language. I remain concerned, however, that some leaders have attempted to replace equality with equity, the results of which could have dire consequences for our students.

In November 2020, Vice President Kamala Harris said, "Equitable treatment means we all end up at the same place." The results of this idea have had profound impacts on public education in other states.

In the name of equity, the State of Oregon last year enacted a law revising its high school graduation standards. Designed to achieve what the governor's office described as "equitable graduation standards," the law repeals the state's requirement that a graduating student demonstrate an ability to read, write, and do math at a high school level.

In the name of equity, the State of California's Department of Education last year developed a plan to end accelerated math opportunities, closing the door on students to expand their horizons with higher level mathematics classes, like calculus.

These are just a couple of examples where the political pursuit of equity in education undermines the interests of students.

I don't wish to see Montana's public schools fall into the traps of promoting a political agenda, in the name of equity, that jeopardizes our students' opportunities. This would do a grave disservice to the students who should, and must, come first. Their interests must come before any politically motivated interests that will compromise their education.

Instead of promoting equity, the concept that "we all end up at the same place" or with equal results, we should promote equality in education, the idea that every student should enjoy equal opportunity to learn, thrive, and reach his or her full, outstanding potential.

I urge CSPAC to avoid unnecessary controversy in our classrooms by keeping the current language in Principle III, Part B. Further, Montana law prohibits advisory councils such as CSPAC from setting policy. Modification of the Code of Ethics is a policy decision that ultimately is under the jurisdiction of the Board of Public Education and not CSPAC in its advisory role to the Board.

Thank you for your service to our students and the State of Montana.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Greg Gianforte". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Greg Gianforte
Governor

cc: Montana Board of Public Education