

To: Members, Wisconsin Assembly
From: Jennifer Kammerud, Legislative Liaison JK
Date: October 15, 2013
Re: **2013 Assembly Bill 297 related to the use of race-based nicknames, logos, mascots, and team names by school boards.**

State Superintendent Evers seeks to ensure a quality education for every child through attention to and respect for diversity, including differences in race and culture. 2013 AB 297 runs counter to this effort.

By requiring the signatures of 10 percent of a school district's membership in order to file a complaint, *AB 297 enshrines in statute an unacceptable level of discrimination*. This provision removes an individual's recourse through the state complaint process by requiring others in the community to validate his or her own personal experiences. In what other situation is the victim of harassment, stereotyping, and discrimination required to gather signatures in order for a hearing to be held or the matter considered?

Additionally, even if the 10 percent threshold is reached, the bill would require the Department of Administration's Division of Hearing and Appeals to hold a hearing on complaints related to mascots and logos, instead of the DPI. This Division would follow the same requirements that the DPI's hearing officers do in conducting a hearing. Although the State Superintendent is the independently elected constitutional officer charged with overseeing public education in Wisconsin, AB 297 would divorce this specific issue from the department's general oversight of all matters related to alleged discrimination in Wisconsin schools.

This bill runs counter to the growing body of research documenting the negative educational outcomes associated with the use of American Indian mascots, logos and nicknames, regardless of intent. Based on research showing a clear link between the use of mascots, logos, and nicknames and psychological harm, the American Psychological Association (APA) adopted a resolution in 2005 calling upon schools to end the use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities for their athletic teams. In 2007, the American Sociological Association (ASA) cited this same research in calling for the discontinuation and elimination of the use of Native American nicknames, logos, and mascots.

For these reasons, we encourage members of the Legislature to oppose AB 297.