



Monitoring and Investigating Equity and Civil Rights Discrimination in Washington Public Schools

2025–27 Operating Budget Decision Package

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) Equity and Civil Rights Office is directed to publish rules and guidelines to eliminate discrimination in Washington school districts, and to monitor and enforce district compliance with those rules and guidelines. State law prohibits discrimination in K–12 public schools, and the services provided by the Office are available to anyone seeking information, technical assistance, or to file a complaint. With discrimination complaints increasing, OSPI requests funding to support the Equity and Civil Rights Office's capacity to investigate these complaints and support students, families, educators, and school districts in a thorough and timely manner.

FISCAL DETAIL

Operating Expenditures	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Fund 001-1 (program 010)	\$663,000	\$619,000	\$619,000	\$619,000
Total Expenditures	\$663,000	\$619,000	\$619,000	\$619,000
Biennial Totals	\$1,282,000		\$1,238,000	
Staffing	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
FTEs	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Average Annual	4.0		4.0	
Object of Expenditure	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Obj. A	\$382,000	\$382,000	\$382,000	\$382,000
Obj. B	\$183,000	\$183,000	\$183,000	\$183,000
Obj E	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$27,000
Obj G	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$27,000
Obj J	\$44,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Revenue	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Fund 001-1	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Revenue	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Biennial Totals	\$0.00		\$0.00	

PACKAGE DESCRIPTION

The Equity and Civil Rights Office works to ensure that each student has equal access to public education without discrimination. The Office supports nondiscrimination in Washington public schools by raising awareness of rights and district responsibilities under state and federal civil rights laws, developing tools and resources to facilitate equitable access for all students to school programs and activities, and monitoring school district and public charter school compliance with state and federal civil rights laws. K–12 public schools are legally prohibited from discriminating against any individual based on sex, race, color, religion, creed, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, the use of a trained dog guide or service animal, and honorably discharged veteran or individuals with military status. Complaints can be filed by anyone, including students, families, and school district employees.

OSPI's Equity and Civil Rights Office is tasked with:

- Developing and implementing rules and guidelines for implementing civil rights protections in schools;
- Identifying and eliminating discriminatory policies, procedures, and practices within Washington public schools by conducting compliance reviews and investigating and resolving complaints;
- Providing clear and effective technical assistance, resources, tools, and support for parents, school districts, and others regarding civil rights and discrimination;
- Informing families about their rights and facilitating effective resolutions to civils rights complaints; and
- Training school district staff regarding rights and responsibilities under civil rights laws, complaint and investigation procedures, and available OSPI supports and services.

What is the problem, opportunity, or priority you are addressing with the request?

The number of nondiscrimination complaints coming into OSPI's Equity and Civil Rights Office has increased significantly and is expected to continue to grow with the passage of the Parents' Bill of Rights Initiative during the 2024 Legislative Session (I-2081). Increasing awareness among families and district staff of civil rights responsibilities and OSPI services, as well as increasing attention on civil rights issues nationally are also contributing factors to the growth in complaints.

From 2018 through 2022, the Office received an average of 23 complaints each year. In 2023 the Office received more than double that average, at 57 complaints, and the trend continues with the Office having received 34 complaints by June of 2024. Additional staff are needed to adequately address the increase in compliant filings, and to support more preventative services to school districts such as compliance monitoring and training.

What is your proposal?

This proposal funds additional staffing within OSPI's Equity and Civil Rights Office to support the increased volume and complexity of the nondiscrimination complaints received from families, districts, and the public. While the Office already monitors compliance and provides professional development and technical assistance to schools, it does not currently have the capacity to

provide all school districts with the level of support they need to implement effective strategies to eliminate discrimination and close opportunity gaps. Lastly, the requested resources will expand OSPI's ability to update policy guidance and resources for school districts, as well as develop resources for families and student-focused community groups such as parent-and student-focused trainings and resources.

School districts and public charter schools will benefit from even more targeted and intensive technical assistance and training to support their equity and civil rights initiatives and compliance with state and federal nondiscrimination laws, such as improved equity in access to courses and programs, better protections and services for students with disabilities, schools that are safe and supportive to all students, gender-inclusive schools, and language access for students and families whose primary home language is a language other than English.

How is your proposal impacting equity in the state?

1. This proposal is directly connected to equitable access to educational opportunities for Washington students. See above for more details.
2. At the forefront of every program, policy, and decision, OSPI actively focuses on ensuring all students have access to the instruction and support they need to succeed in our schools. This proposal is focused on the needs of our most vulnerable students, particularly students of color, American Indian/Alaska Native students, and highly mobile students including migrant students, those in foster care, and those experiencing homelessness. These student groups face unique systemic barriers to completing their K–12 education, barriers which perpetuate larger systemic inequities that persist along racial and socioeconomic lines.
3. See above.
4. See above.

What are you purchasing and how does it solve the problem?

This proposal funds OSPI to hire 4.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff to support the Equity and Civil Rights Office:

- 3 FTE staff at the Program Supervisor level, and
- 1 FTE staff at the Administrative Program Specialist 2 level.

The Program Supervisors' role will provide complex technical assistance, conduct investigations, prepare and provide training, and participate in policy and resource development. Adding three more Program Supervisors will expand the Office's capacity to improve guidance and training, as well as conduct effective and timely investigations.

The new Administrative Program Specialist will take on administrative work, such as website management, responding to public records requests, and purchasing, allowing current staff to focus on technical assistance and customer service.

What alternatives did you explore and why was this option chosen?

OSPI has a distinct and unique need for additional support for its Equity and Civil Rights Office. To ensure consistent and prompt support for school districts, families, and students the Office needs the additional staffing outlined in this proposal.

Current alternatives include the Office being less proactive in its outreach and technical assistance, and less responsive to school districts as it struggles to take on an increasing workload without new resources, further disadvantaging already disadvantaged students, and weakening state ability to monitor and enforce state and federal equity and civil rights laws.

What resources does the agency already have that are dedicated to this purpose?

OSPI's Equity and Civil Rights Office currently has seven full-time staff and lacks any additional resource to hire new staff without the new state funding outlined in this proposal.

ASSUMPTIONS AND CALCULATIONS

Expansion, reduction, elimination or alteration of a current program or service:

This proposal does not represent an expansion, reduction, or elimination of a current program but does expand funding for OSPI's existing Equity and Civil Rights Office and its duties and responsibilities to monitor school district compliance with nondiscrimination laws outlined under RCW 28A.640 and RCW 28A.642.

Detailed assumptions and calculations:

OSPI requests \$663,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$619,000 in fiscal year 2027 ongoing to support a 1.0 FTE Administrative Program Specialist, and 3.0 FTE Program Supervisors.

Workforce assumptions:

Fiscal Year 2026 (Total = \$663,000)

Administrative Program Specialist 2: 1.0 FTE

- Salary: \$91,068
- Benefits: \$44,446
- Goods/Services: \$6,678
- Travel: \$6,678
- Equipment: \$11,130 (one-time)

Program Supervisor (WMS 2): 3.0 FTE

- Salary: \$290,970
- Benefits: \$138,572
- Goods/Services: \$20,034
- Travel: \$20,034
- Equipment: \$33,390 (one-time)

Fiscal Year 2027 and Ongoing (Total = \$619,000 Annually)

Administrative Program Specialist 2: 1.0 FTE

- Salary: \$91,068
- Benefits: \$44,576

- Goods/Services: \$6,678
- Travel: \$6,678

Program Supervisor (WMS 2): 3.0 FTE

- Salary: \$290,970
- Benefits: \$138,962
- Goods/Services: \$20,034
- Travel: \$20,034

Historical funding:

Fiscal Year 2026

- FTE = 0.0 FTE
- Total Funds = \$0
- Near General Fund = \$0
- Other Funds = \$0

Fiscal Year 2027

- FTE = 0.0 FTE
- Total Funds = \$0
- Near General Fund = \$0
- Other Funds = \$0

STRATEGIC AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Strategic framework:

This proposal supports Superintendent Reykdal's Strategic Goals, particularly serving to advance Goals #1 and #4; ensuring Washington's students have equitable access to strong foundations, and a committed, unified and customer-focused OSPI. Timely and effective civil rights compliance monitoring, and investigation and resolution of discrimination complaints are essential to supporting the world-class education highlighted in the Governor's Results Washington goals.

Performance outcomes:

Increased Timeliness and Efficiency in Complaint Resolution

With resources to hire additional staff, OSPI's Equity and Civil Rights Office will be able to resolve nondiscrimination complaints more quickly and efficiently, leading to faster resolutions and less disruption for students, families, and school districts.

Enhanced Capacity for Proactive Compliance Monitoring

Bringing on additional staff will allow the Office to conduct more proactive reviews of district compliance with state and federal civil rights laws and guidance, provide better technical assistance around compliance, and identify and address potential discrimination issues before they escalate into formal complaints. More robust and proactive civil rights compliance

monitoring will work to prevent discriminatory practices in Washington public schools and support a more equitable educational environment across the state.

Increased Support for Vulnerable Student Populations

Bringing on additional staff will enhance the Office's ability to support vulnerable student groups, including students of color, students identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, students who identify as LGBTQ+, and students with disabilities. This targeted support will work toward closing opportunity gaps and ensure that all K–12 students have access to the resources they need to succeed.

Improved Quality and Availability of Technical Assistance

By bringing on additional staff at the Program Supervisor level, the Office will be able to offer higher-quality technical assistance and training to school districts. This increased technical support will lead to better implementation of state and federal civil rights laws and guidelines in schools, ultimately improving equity in student access to educational programs and services.

OTHER COLLATERAL CONNECTIONS

Intergovernmental:

None.

Stakeholder impacts:

None.

Legal or administrative mandates:

OSPI is tasked with supporting and monitoring school district compliance with nondiscrimination laws outlined under RCW 28A.640 and RCW 28A.642.

Changes from current law:

None.

State workforce impacts:

None.

State facilities impacts:

None.

Puget Sound recovery:

N/A

Governor's salmon strategy:

N/A