



United States Mission to the OSCE
Statement on Tolerance and Non-discrimination
at HDIM Session 9

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Michael Kozak, Head of Delegation
Warsaw
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Today, more than ever, it is important that education at all levels promotes excellence and equal access for all students regardless of background or circumstance. We believe that a key priority is to help develop opportunities for communities that are often the most underserved, including reforms that will help allow students to reach their full potential.

For example, a cornerstone federal education law supports states and school districts in improving equity and excellence in primary and secondary education, including access to excellent teachers and a positive, safe learning environment. It provides the latitude to do what's best for children while preserving civil rights protections for students.

We must also continue to help communities provide safe educational spaces free from bullying and violence and discrimination so that all students – including girls and students of color, students learning English as a second language, and students with disabilities – have the best chance possible to learn and thrive.

In particular, the United States is committed to promoting and advancing girls' education, at home and abroad.

As our Secretary of Education just commemorated:

Earlier this year marked the 45th anniversary of Title IX, the landmark legislation passed by Congress that seeks to ensure: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

The amendment to the Higher Education Act was initially proposed by Democrat Senator Birch Bayh, signed into law by Republican President Richard Nixon, and was later renamed for Congresswoman Patsy Mink, herself a victim of both sex-based and race-based discrimination as a third-generation Japanese-American.

Mink's law has served an important role in shaping our Nation's educational environment.

Title IX has helped to make clear that educational institutions have a responsibility to protect every student's right to learn in a safe environment and to prevent unjust deprivations of that right.

It is a responsibility that the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights takes seriously,

In addition to its role in enforcing federal civil rights laws and Constitutional protections, including bullying and harassment, under the law it collects and shares data related to educational access and opportunity that covers more than 50 million students in nearly every school in the country. These data are a valuable resource for the government, policymakers, educators and schools officials, parents, students, and the public on matters related to student educational equity and opportunity.

There are many remaining challenges.

Far too many girls in the OSCE region are denied an education due to poverty, violence, instability and conflict, and harmful social and cultural norms—such as early and forced marriage—that force girls to drop out of school much too soon. This is not acceptable. We all must do more to improve education for girls.

As our President has said, “Education has the power to uplift. It has the power to transform. And, perhaps most important, education has the power to create greater equality and justice in our lives.”

We must continue the important work to provide educational access and opportunity to help all students learn, succeed, and fulfill their potential.

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