

Lawyers want Calif. schools to stop asking citizenship-related questions

By Loretta Kalb, Sacramento Bee

Civil rights lawyers have identified 75 California school districts, including one in El Dorado County, that they believe may deter immigrant families from enrolling their children by asking for information such as Social Security numbers and citizenship status.

California Rural Legal Assistance and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area called on state Attorney General Xavier Becerra to investigate the 75 districts' enrollment practices. Students have "clear legal protections" to attend school, the report said, but they could be "unlawfully discouraged" from doing so when asked for information related to citizenship status.

"Truthfully, it's not who we are and not what we believe," said Superintendent Marcy Guthrie with the Mother Lode Union School District. She was flabbergasted to learn that her district had landed in the lawyers' report showing that students entering her district were asked to share their citizenship status. "I just hung up with the principal of our elementary school. We've already pulled (the forms) down from the website. We're making it right."

The district is small, with just 1,100 students at an elementary and a middle school that serves students from El Dorado, Diamond Springs and Placerville.

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