



West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund

555–409 Granville Street, Vancouver, BC, V6C 1T2

t: 604.684.8772 e: info@westcoastleaf.org

westcoastleaf.org

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Burnaby Board of Education School Trustees
Burnaby School Board
5325 Kincaid Street
Burnaby, BC V5G 1W2

Dear Trustees:

We write to urge you to consider establishing a Sanctuary Schools policy to assure all parents that their children can access public education in Burnaby without fear that doing so will put their lives in Canada at risk.

West Coast LEAF is a non-profit organization that was formed in 1985, the year the equality guarantees of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* came into force. Our mission is to achieve equality by changing historic patterns of discrimination against women in BC through equality rights litigation, law reform and public legal education.

We have previously developed a position paper aimed at the City of Vancouver requesting that it consider becoming a Sanctuary City to ensure that people without official immigration status in Canada can safely access vital public services without fear. In particular, we were concerned that women may choose to remain in violent situations because they fear that accessing the public services designed to support their safety could lead to detention or deportation.

Women without status are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation because their precarious immigration status is often used as a threat by abusers. Some women may stay in violent relationships with partners who have legal status in Canada simply to ensure that their children can continue to access public education without risk. Fear of detention or deportation can be a major barrier to fleeing violence because women are forced to either forgo basic public services or risk their own lives in Canada to access them.

A Sanctuary School policy would assure women without status that their children can access education in Burnaby without risk. Such a policy would also reduce barriers for women experiencing abuse because they would be able to flee violence without fear that doing so may undermine their child's ability to get an education or put their lives in Canada at risk.

Yours truly,

Kendra Milne
Director of Law Reform
West Coast LEAF