

Viewpoints

SCOTUS To Hear Case Questioning Standard of Proof in Disability Discrimination Claims



The *A.J.T. v. Osseo Area Schools* case, now pending before the United States Supreme Court, holds significant implications for the scope of disability discrimination claims under federal law, particularly in the context of public schools.

The case revolves around whether a school district's failure to accommodate a student's disability constitutes discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Specifically, the Court will examine the extent to which schools can be held accountable for failing to provide necessary accommodations that enable students with disabilities to fully participate in educational opportunities.

A ruling in favor of A.J.T. could potentially broaden the scope of liability for schools, compelling them to be more proactive in identifying and addressing the unique needs of students with disabilities. Such a decision could



signal a shift toward stronger protections for students, ensuring that schools are not only compliant with legal requirements but also actively fostering an environment of inclusion and accessibility.

At the heart of this case is the challenge of balancing educational autonomy with the rights of students with disabilities. Should the Supreme Court rule in favor of Osseo Area Schools, it could narrow the pathway for future claims under the ADA and Section 504, raising the bar for proving intentional discrimination or inadequate accommodations. This would have significant consequences for how schools design and implement policies related to students with disabilities, potentially reducing the legal burden on institutions but also limiting students' ability to seek redress when accommodations are lacking.

Conversely, a decision in favor of A.J.T. would reinforce the obligation of public schools to ensure equitable access to education for students with disabilities, pushing school systems across the country to prioritize accommodations that go beyond mere compliance and toward a more inclusive, student-centered approach. Ultimately, this case could define the legal standards for disability discrimination in education for years to come, influencing both policy and practice in the educational sector.

<https://www.k12dive.com/news/supreme-court-school-disability-discrimination-case/738249/>

The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case that questions whether students filing disability discrimination claims must prove that public school officials acted with discriminatory intent through “bad faith or gross misjudgment.”

In *A.J.T. v. Osseo Area Schools*, a Minnesota student, Ava, and her parents are challenging an 8th Circuit ruling from March 2024 that children with disabilities who claim disability discrimination in educational settings under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 must meet a high standard to potentially receive monetary damages.

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