

April 26, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Senate Labor-H Approps. Subcom.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Senate Labor-H Approps. Subcom.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
Chairwoman
House Labor-H Approps. Subcom.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
House Labor-H Approps. Subcom.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Blunt, Chairwoman DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

At the heart of disparate education outcomes in our country are growing poverty, resegregation, and inequities in school funding and resources.ⁱ Sixty-seven years after the *Brown v. Board* decision, our nation's public schools are segregated at alarmingly high levels. This is despite the research showing the benefits of racially and socioeconomically integrated and inclusive schools and classrooms for all students. Congress's Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (L-HHS) Appropriations Subcommittees play a key part in helping the federal government fulfill its civil rights responsibilities. This includes helping states and districts provide integrated and inclusive learning environments. **As such, we, the undersigned organizations, ask that in fiscal year (FY) 2022, the L-HHS Subcommittees (1) invest at least \$500 million in the Magnet Schools Assistance Program; (2) provide \$120 million to support comprehensive, locally led strategies to promote racial and socioeconomic integration; and (3) make states, districts, and communities aware of existing resources under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and other federal funds that can be used to support school integration.**

Research shows that all students attending integrated schools reap social and academic benefits. A synthesis of four decades of research highlights these benefits, including higher achievement in math, science, language, and reading; higher educational attainment; more advanced social and historical thinking; and increased civic participation.ⁱⁱ These benefits to individual students also benefit society.

Studies have also found strong relationships between racial segregation and disparate educational outcomes.ⁱⁱⁱ In fact, the racial composition of a school has educational impacts for students even after accounting for socioeconomic status. Segregation reinforces resource inequities at a structural level, depriving schools that disproportionately serve students of color of critical resources and supports,^{iv} including fewer certified and experienced teachers, greater instability caused by rapid turnover of faculty, less access to rigorous coursework, and fewer educational resources.^v

Further, students attending racially isolated schools lose out on the benefits of integrated education that flow from increased intergroup contact, including improved critical thinking and problem-solving skills and increased likelihood of living and working in integrated settings as adults.^{vi}

Yet since the high point of school integration in 1988, the share of intensely segregated non-white schools (defined as those schools with 0–10% white students) has more than tripled, increasing from about 6% to 19% of all public schools.^{vii} Further, a large proportion of white students attend overwhelmingly racially isolated schools, with more than one third attending schools that are 90% to 100% white.^{viii}

Fortunately, the FY 2022 funding measure can help support student access to integrated and inclusive learning environments. The L-HHS Subcommittees can help increase access to integrated and inclusive schools and aid the federal government in fulfilling its civil rights role in the following ways:

1. **Increase funding for the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP).** Syntheses of the research on magnet schools has found positive outcomes for integration and students' social and academic outcomes. Yet funding for magnet schools has not kept pace with other federal investments in education. In FY 2021 funding for the federal MSAP (\$109 million) was less than it was in FY 1989 (\$114 million).^{ix} MSAP's current funding is misaligned with the important role magnet schools can play in creating more integrated education settings. We therefore recommend a funding level of at least \$500 million for MSAP FY 2022. We also encourage the L-HHS Subcommittees to direct the Department of Education to engage in rulemaking and other activities to update MSAP to better align with evidence-based best practices.
2. **Allocate \$120 million for a grant program that would enable state and local educational agencies to develop and implement comprehensive strategies to promote racial and socioeconomic integration in early childhood education programs and elementary and secondary schools.** This request is directly aligned with the Biden administration's FY 2022 discretionary budget request, which asks Congress to create "a new grant program to help communities develop and implement strategies that would build more diverse student bodies."^x To that end, we recommend the following legislative language:¹

"Provided further that \$120,000,000, to remain until expended, shall be for competitive grants to state and local educational agencies to develop and implement comprehensive strategies to improve socioeconomic and racial integration in early childhood education programs and elementary and secondary education schools, of which up to \$6,000,000 may be used for national activities, including technical assistance, evaluation, and dissemination of effective, research-based strategies to increase racial, socioeconomic, and linguistic diversity."
3. **Help make states, districts, and communities aware of existing opportunities under long-standing federal programs and funding streams that can be used to support student access to integrated and inclusive learning environments.** Thanks to the L-HHS Subcommittees' work, the last of three long-standing prohibitions on the use of federal funds for transportation to support school integration was eliminated late last year.^{xi} These provisions stood for nearly 50 years. As such, many states and districts may be unaware of the ability of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and other federal funds to support integration programs, such as interdistrict programs or magnet schools. Therefore, we request that the L-HHS Subcommittees direct the Department of Education to make state and local educational agencies aware of the removal of these prohibitions and the ability of federal funds to support transportation for school integration.
4. **Include report language to remind states and districts about the availability of funding under Title I, Part A of ESEA for use to support school integration.** ESEA requires states to set aside 7% of Title I funds to implement evidence-based interventions for low-performing schools. Districts can use these funds to support integration via magnet schools and other integration strategies. We recommend inclusion of the following report language to support states and districts seeking to access Title I funds to support school integration:

¹ The draft report language is designed to reflect the provisions of the Strength in Diversity Act, which passed the House in a bipartisan manner during the 116th Congress and was reintroduced in February 2021, and President Biden's FY 2022 discretionary budgetary request.

“The Committee notes that an increase in Title I funding overall also increases aid for the Title I set-aside in current law, Section 1003, which provides funding for schools identified for comprehensive and targeted support and improvement. The Committee notes that funds under Section 1003 can be used to support socioeconomic and racial integration in schools as an evidence-based strategy to improve schools identified for improvement under ESEA.”

Thank you for your time and for your work to ensure that all students have access to integrated, inclusive, and well-resourced learning environments. We look forward to working with you on these recommendations that are vital to our children’s and our nation’s collective success.

Sincerely,

National Coalition on School Diversity

Alliance for Excellent Education

American Federation of Teachers

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

Committee for Children

Communities In Schools (National Office)

Council of Administrators of Special Education

EDGE Consulting Partners

ERASE Racism

Feminist Majority Foundation

Girls Inc.

Institute for Social Progress at Wayne County Community College District

IntegrateNYC

Integration and Innovation Initiative (i3) NYU Metro Center

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)

Magnet Schools of America

Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO)

National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector

National Center for Parent Leadership, Advocacy, and Community Empowerment (National PLACE)

National Center for Youth Law

National PTA

National Urban League

New York Appleseed

North Carolina Justice Center

PDK International

Poverty & Race Research Action Council

Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)

Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy at Brandeis University's Heller School for Social Policy

South Side Early Learning

Southern Education Foundation

Teach Plus

The Civil Rights Project at UCLA

The Education Trust

The Institute for Child, Youth and Family Policy, Brandeis University and diversitydatakids.org

UnidosUS

UnifiEd

Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corp. (VICC)

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Cc:

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Vice Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Kay Granger, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chairwoman, Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee

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ⁱ Darling-Hammond, L. (2018). *Education and the path to one nation, indivisible*. Learning Policy Institute.

<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/education-path-one-nation-indivisible-brief>.

ⁱⁱ Mickelson, R. A. (2016). *School integration and k–12 outcomes: An updated quick synthesis of the social science evidence*. National Coalition on School Diversity. <https://www.school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo5.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Brief of 553 Social Scientists as Amici Curiae in Support of Respondents, *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*. 551 U.S. 701 (2007). https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/legal-developments/court-decisions/statement-of-american-social-scientists-of-research-on-school-desegregation-submitted-to-us-supreme-court/amicus_parents_v_seattle.pdf.

^{iv} Ayscue, J., Frankenberg, E., & Siegel-Hawley, G. (2017). *The complementary benefits of racial and socioeconomic diversity in schools*. National Coalition on School Diversity.

^v Cardichon, J., Darling-Hammond, L., Yang, M., Scott, C., Shields, P. M., & Burns, D. (2020). *Inequitable opportunity to learn: Student access to certified and experienced teachers*. Learning Policy Institute; Darling-Hammond, L. (2018). *Education and the path to one nation, indivisible*. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/education-path-one-nation-indivisible-brief>.

^{vi} Ayscue, J., Frankenberg, E. & Siegel-Hawley, G. (2017). *The complementary benefits of racial and socioeconomic diversity in schools*. The National Coalition on School Diversity; Orfield, G., Ee, J., Frankenberg, E., & Siegel-Hawley, G. (2016). *Brown at 62: School segregation by race, poverty and state*. Civil Rights Project; Brief of 553 Social Scientists as Amici Curiae in Support of Respondents, *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*. 551 U.S. 701 (2007).

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^{vii} U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey data. Data prior to 1991 were obtained from the analysis of the Office of Civil Rights data in Orfield, G. (1983). *Public school desegregation in the United States, 1968–1980*. Joint Center for Political Studies.

https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/public-school-desegregation-in-the-united-states-1968-1980/orfield_american-desegregation-1983.pdf.

^{viii} Potter, H., Quick, K., & Davies, E. (2016). *A new wave of school integration: Districts and charters pursuing socioeconomic diversity*. Century Foundation. <https://tcf.org/content/report/a-new-waveof-school-integration/?session=1>.

^{ix} Biennial Evaluation Report – FY 93-94, Magnet School Assistance Program. (n.d.).

<https://www2.ed.gov/pubs/Biennial/132.html> (accessed 04/09/21); Division H—Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2021. (n.d.).

<https://docs.house.gov/bills/thisweek/20201221/BILLS-116RCP68-JES-DIVISION-H.pdf> (accessed 04/09/21).

^x Summary of the President’s Discretionary Funding Request. (n.d.). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/FY2022-Discretionary-Request.pdf> (accessed 04/09/21).

^{xi} The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (P.L. 116-260). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/133/text/pl?overview=closed>.