

May 22, 2019

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of
Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of
Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Vision Statement

A teaching profession
that is student oriented,
well respected, and
personally fulfilling.

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Dear Chairman Scott and Representative Foxx,

America's schoolchildren and the adults who serve them face numerous challenges. One challenge in particular exacerbates many others: the current teaching population is not reflective of the students they serve. We know this can have a negative impact on our students, especially those in at-risk populations, and it also has a negative impact on those in the teaching profession.

We at the Association of American Educators Foundation and the seventy-five undersigned education organizations believe that this is a problem we can all work together to solve and that doing so rewards not only our students, but current and future educators as well. **We believe that increasing teacher diversity elevates the teaching profession and improves the lives and outcomes of all students.**

A solution requires an increase in the recruitment, training, hiring, and retention of a highly qualified, diverse teaching population reflective of the student population, especially for people of colorⁱ, while maintaining the integrity of the teaching profession. Virtually every individual, organization, and government agency involved in education has a role to play in developing and implementing solutions to this end, and no one entity alone will be able to solve it. Lasting improvements will be the result of significant changes as well as the accumulation of individual decisions and contributions by those not currently engaged on this issue. The gesture of a single teacher to a colleague to ensure that together they are making progress on this issue will not alone overcome the challenge, but with each individual effort solutions become more possible.

This is not a newly discovered or analyzed problem. Federal data show that 53% of public school students are children of color, while 18% of teachers identify as a person of color.ⁱⁱ Almost every state has a significant diversity gap and too many individual schools and communities have an even greater divide.ⁱⁱⁱ The percentage of students of color, already a majority of students, is projected to increase in the coming years.^{iv} Teacher diversity has nominally improved but continues to be outpaced by the growth in student diversity.

Research has long shown evidence of large achievement gaps between white and non-white students in the U.S. One factor that contributes to these gaps is the lack of diversity of the public teacher workforce.^v A recent university study concluded that low-income black students randomly assigned to at least one black teacher in third, fourth, or fifth grade were 18% more likely to express interest in college when they graduated.^{vi} The same criteria also reported a reduction in a black student's probability of dropping out of school by 29%.^{vii} For very low-income black boys, their chance of dropping out fell 39% when they have at least one black teacher in third through fifth grade.^{viii} In that same study, very low-income black boys (those receiving free or reduced-price lunches throughout primary school) were 29% more likely to say they were considering college.^{ix}

It has also been demonstrated that teacher diversity has a positive impact on all students.^x It is impactful for all students to see diverse individuals thriving in educator roles to remove social bias and improve cultural acceptance – as well as improve student success.

Solutions must take into account (1) the unquestionable value of a highly qualified teaching corps that reflects the community it serves, not only for students of underrepresented populations but for all students and all teachers, (2) that numerous barriers to entry into the teaching profession pipeline are likely contributing to the problem, but simply lowering barriers may do more harm than good, and (3) that other problems impacting teacher morale, training, support, respect, and lack of leadership may also contribute to lack of teacher diversity.

Shortsighted solutions and halfhearted efforts will likely contribute to the problem rather than solve it, and will delay lasting improvements; for example, placing unprepared and unsupported teachers of color in classrooms as a quick solution to meeting measurable goals does a disservice to all, including those teachers.

A 2016 US Department of Education report on racial diversity in education identified multiple points at which diversity in the teacher pipeline decreases, including postsecondary enrollment, enrollment in education programs, postsecondary completion, job opportunities, and retention

ⁱ For most of the research used, “people of color” includes those who identify as African American or black and Hispanic or Latino/a/x. In some of the cited research, “people of color” also includes those of Asian, Pacific-Islander, or Native American descent, although sometimes these people are included in a group with white students or teachers, or their scores and information are not included because their numbers or size were too small to report.

ⁱⁱ U. S. Department of Education/Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development. (2016). *The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from <https://www.ed.gov/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Boser, Ulrich. (2014). *Teacher Diversity Revisited: A New State-by-State Analysis*. Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/>

^{iv} U. S. Department of Education/Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development. (2016). *The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from <https://www.ed.gov/>

^v Putnam, H., Hansen, M., Walsh, K., & Quintero, D. (2016). *High Hopes and Harsh Realities: The Real Challenges to Building a Diverse Workforce*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/>

^{vi} Gershenson, S., Hart, C., Lindsay, C. & Papageorge, N. (2017). *The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers*. Bonn, Germany: IZA Institute of Labor Economics. Retrieved from <http://www.iza.org/>

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} Ibid.

^x Wells, A.S., Fox, L. & Cordova-Cobo, D. (2016). *How racially diverse schools and classrooms can benefit all students*. New York City: The Century Foundation. Retrieved from <https://tcf.org/>

efforts. This means a comprehensive solution is necessary and a broad coalition must work together on this issue—even and especially in groups who fervently disagree about other issues. Letting this important issue fall victim to an increasingly polarized political environment only makes solutions ever more elusive.

Increasing teacher diversity for all students necessitates a rejection of teacher segregation by school and district. Possibly well-intentioned efforts to increase the numbers of teachers of color in schools serving predominantly students of color may also further segregate the teaching population, may contribute to higher rates of turnover for teachers of color, and may discourage highly qualified white teachers from serving in highly diverse schools.

No solution should imply that an educator *must* match the background of a student in order to be effective or that students should *only* experience educators who match their background—quite the opposite. Each student should be experiencing a diverse teaching population representing the community, improving attitudes and experiences in a proudly diverse nation.

Teacher associations should expand on resources for members to take action in their classroom, school, and district at advocating for teacher diversity, facilitating productive discussion about increasing teacher diversity, supporting teachers of color, and more.

Community and other nonprofit organizations working with students and teachers have the ability to support individuals in their efforts to become involved in education. Numerous organizations provide coaching and advocacy efforts to increase access and opportunity to a diverse group of people interested in working in and advancing the teaching profession.

There have been efforts made by several states, districts, organizations, and schools to improve diversity in teaching. Fifteen states have included diversity in teaching accountability measures and initiatives as part of Title II in their ESSA plans. Some of these items include tuition reimbursement, teaching residency programs, and alternative certification programming. Xavier University of Louisiana just accepted the second cohort of aspiring teachers into its Teacher Residency Program. Teacher preparation programs at The University of Colorado Denver and in the city of Boston are looking at creating pipelines from high school to classroom teacher for “homegrown teachers” that identify deeply with the communities they serve. The Fellowship of Black Male Educators in Philadelphia is working to encourage, develop, and retain black men in education roles through mentorship, support, and cultural connectivity.

Overall, there is no one way to improve diversity among teachers across America. Every school, district, agency, university, and state is currently in a position to make changes to the methods in which they recruit, train, hire, and retain all highly qualified teachers. By diversifying our teaching force, all students will achieve more academically and socially.

The organizations signing onto this letter stand ready to work with you and state and local leaders on this important issue. We ask that when making determinations about pending legislation you consider how they might increase or decrease teacher diversity. We encourage you to avail yourself of our assistance in making those determinations. We believe funding for

additional research to evaluate solutions that are being implemented in states and districts across the country as well as the toll this issue takes on our students will be helpful in developing and implementing solutions.

We thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Colin Sharkey
Executive Director
Association of American Educators Foundation



Sekou J. Biddle
Vice President, K-12 Advocacy
United Negro College Fund

Alliance for Diversity and Excellence (ADE)
American Association for Employment in Education (AAEE)
American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences (AAFCS)
American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT)
American Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA)
American Association of Teachers of German (AATG)
American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)
American Guild of Organists (AGO)
American School Counselor Association (ASCA)
Arkansas State Teachers Association (ASTA)
Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana (APEL)
Association for Science Teacher Education (ASTE)
Association of American Educators (AAE)
Association of American Educators Foundation (AAEF)
Association of Teacher Educators (ATE)
Bluum
Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity
California Charter Schools Association (CCSA)
Center for School Change (CSC)
Charter Schools Association of Nevada (CSAN)
Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE)
Colorado League of Charter Schools (CLCS)
ConnCAN
Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
Delaware Charter Schools Network (DCSN)
Diverse Charter Schools Coalition
Educators for Excellence (E4E)

Educators Rising, a division of Phi Delta Kappa International (PDK)
Florida Charter School Alliance (FCSA)
Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools (FCPCS)
ForwARd Arkansas
Friends of Choice in Urban Schools (FOCUS)
Georgia Charter Schools Association (GCSA)
GeorgiaCAN
HawaiiKidsCAN
Illinois Network of Charter Schools (INCS)
International Literacy Association (ILA)
International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI)
International Technology and Engineering Educators Association (ITEEA)
JerseyCAN
Kansas Association of American Educators (KANAAE)
Kansas School Superintendents Association (KSSA)
Kappa Delta Pi (KDP)
Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools (LAPCS)
Missouri Charter Public School Association (MCPSA)
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS)
National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME)
National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE)
National Association of Educational Office Professionals (NAEOP)
National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)
National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)
National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASET)
National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE)
National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)
National Network of State Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY)
National Tutoring Association (NTA)
New Jersey Charter Schools Association (NJCSA)
New Schools New Orleans (NSNO)
NewMexicoKids CAN
North Carolina Association for Public Charter Schools (NCAPCS)
Northeast Charter Schools Network (NECSN)
Northwest Professional Educators (NWPE)
Oklahoma Public School Resource Center (OPSRC)
Organization of American Historians (OAH)
Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools (PCPCS)
Professional Association of Colorado Educators (PACE)
PS305
Public Charter School Alliance of South Carolina (PCSACS)
Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE)

Tennessee Charter School Center (TCSC)
Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA)
Texas Charter Schools Association (TCSA)
The Fellowship of Black Male Educators
Thomas B. Fordham Institute
United Negro College Fund (UNCF)