

The National Coalition on School Diversity

NCSD Letter in Support of the Maryland Education Development Collaborative

The National Coalition on School Diversity (NCSD) is a network of national civil rights organizations, university-based research centers, and state and local coalitions working to expand support for government policies that promote school diversity and reduce racial isolation. We also support the work of state and local school diversity practitioners. Our work is informed by an advisory panel of scholars and academic researchers whose work relates to issues of equity, diversity, and desegregation/integration. See www.school-diversity.org for more information about our work.

The NCSD respectfully submits this letter of support regarding the proposed Maryland Education Development Collaborative (EDCo), a “quasi-public [state] instrumentality” that would “[focus] exclusively on innovative school design and 21st Century learning that enhances socioeconomically diverse educational opportunities” for PK-12 public school students in Maryland. EDCo would be the first entity of its kind in the nation; and, we think, addresses some of the common challenges that educators, communities, and policymakers face when doing this work (not the least of which is that they are often working in isolation). We view EDCo as an important potential platform to develop inclusive, racially and economically diverse public schools that coordinate with existing public school systems and help to breach intense patterns of school segregation within and across school district lines in Maryland.

Academic and Social Benefits of Diversity, Harms of Segregation

Studies consistently show that racially, culturally, and economically diverse schools are strongly associated with a range of short and long term benefits for all racial groups.¹ This includes gains in math, science, reading, and critical thinking skills and improvements in graduation rates.² Research also demonstrates that diverse schools are better equipped than high-poverty schools to counteract the negative effects of poverty.³ Over the long-term, students who attend diverse schools are more likely than students from homogeneous schools to choose diverse colleges, neighborhoods, and workplaces later in life.⁴ They possess better critical thinking skills and analytical ability and are more likely to form cross-racial friendships.⁵

On the other hand, a significant body of evidence indicates that racial segregation and poverty concentration are systematically linked to unequal educational opportunities, and are “strongly related to an array of factors that limit educational opportunities and outcomes...[including] less experienced and less qualified teachers, high levels of teacher turnover, less successful peer groups and inadequate

¹ For a summary of this research, see Roslyn Mickelson, “School Integration and K-12 Educational Outcomes: A Quick Synthesis of Social Science Evidence,” (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2015), available at <http://www.school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo5.pdf>; Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, “How Non-Minority Students Also Benefit from Racially Diverse Schools,” (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2012), available at <http://school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo8.pdf>.

² For a summary of this research, see Susan Eaton, “School Racial and Economic Composition & Math and Science Achievement,” (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2011), available at <http://www.school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo1.pdf>; Susan Eaton, “How the Racial and Socioeconomic Composition of Schools and Classrooms Contributes to Literacy, Behavioral Climate, Instructional Organization and High School Graduation Rates,” (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2011), available at <http://school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo2.pdf>.

³ For a summary of this research, see Philip Tegeler, Roslyn Mickelson, and Martha Bottia, “What We Know about School Integration, College Attendance, and the Reduction of Poverty,” (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2011), available at <http://school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo4.pdf>.

⁴ For a summary of this research, see Susan Eaton and Gina Chirichigno, “The Impact of Racially Diverse Schools in a Democratic Society,” (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2011), available at <http://www.school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo3.pdf>.

⁵ Supra note 3. See also Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, “How Non-Minority Students Also Benefit from Racially Diverse Schools,” (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2012), available at <http://school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo8.pdf>.

facilities and learning materials.”⁶ While there are limited examples of high-poverty, racially isolated schools that consistently demonstrate academic success, as a whole, school segregation tends to prevent our most vulnerable students from receiving the education they deserve.⁷

Racial Isolation and Poverty Concentration in Maryland

While our nation made some progress desegregating schools in the 1960s and 1970s, much of that progress—which resulted in a variety of academic and social benefits⁸—has been eroded.⁹ Today, the average student experiences a greater degree of racial isolation than was seen as far back as 1970.¹⁰ Unfortunately, Maryland is no exception to this ongoing trend of increasing segregation and the challenges that accompany it.

In its 2013 report, “Settle for Segregation or Strive for Diversity? A Defining Moment for Maryland’s Schools,” the Civil Rights Project at UCLA noted a striking increase in Black and Latino students attending isolated schools. While segregation has increased across the entire state, the Baltimore metropolitan region has been hit especially hard, with over 57% of Black students attending at least 90% minority schools in 2010 (up from just under 36% in 1990). As of the 2010-11 school year, nearly a quarter of Black students in the metropolitan area attended schools where the student body was at least 99% minority.¹¹ The report observed a similar increase in racial isolation for Latino students in the metro region and throughout the state, and noted a marked increase in socioeconomic isolation for Black and Latino students as well.¹²

As is the case across the country, students of color in Maryland are exposed to concentrated poverty in schools at disparate rates. For example, the average White student in the Baltimore-Towson region attends a school that is 28.4% poor. Similarly, the average Asian-Pacific Islander student attends a school that is 29.2% poor.¹³ In contrast, the average Black student attends a school that is 72.4% poor and the average Hispanic student attends a school that is 52.2% poor.¹⁴ Given what we know about the educational challenges associated with concentrated poverty, a state policy encouraging regions and

⁶ Gary Orfield et al., *E Pluribus... Separation: Deepening Double Segregation for More Students* (Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, 2012), 21, available at http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/mlk-national/e-pluribus...separation-deepening-double-segregation-for-more-students/orfield_epluribus_revised_complete_2012.pdf.

⁷ Douglas N. Harris, *Ending the Blame Game on Educational Inequity: A Study of "High Flying" Schools and NCLB* (Arizona State University, 2006), retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED508527.pdf>.

⁸ Rucker Johnson, "Long-run Impacts of School Desegregation & School Quality on Adult Attainments" (NBER Working Paper No. 16664, 2015) available at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16664> ("for blacks, school desegregation significantly increased both educational and occupational attainments, college quality and adult earnings, reduced the probability of incarceration, and improved adult health status").

⁹ Orfield et al., *supra* note 6.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Jennifer B. Ayscue et al., *Settle for Segregation or Strive for Diversity? A Defining Moment for Maryland’s Public Schools*. (The Civil Rights Project / Proyecto Derechos Civiles, 2013), available at http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/settle-for-segregation-or-strive-for-diversity-a-defining-moment-for-maryland2019s-public-schools/MARYLAND_4-17-13_POST.pdf, see graph at 27.

¹² *Id.* at 40. "In addition to the increasing trend toward racial segregation, black and Latino students in Maryland also experience segregation by class. Black students attend schools that are 54.6% low-income at the state level and 54.8% low-income in the Baltimore-Washington CMSA. Latino students attend schools that are 49.9% low-income at the state level and 49.9% low income in the Baltimore-Washington CMSA. In striking contrast, white students attend schools that are 27.2% low-income at the state level and 24.4% low-income in the Baltimore Washington CMSA. At all levels of analysis, black and Latino students experience increasing levels of double segregation by race and class, which has serious implications for the quality of schooling provided to these students."

¹³ diversitydata.org, *Poverty Rate of School Where Average Primary School Student Attends by Race/Ethnicity*, available at <http://diversitydata.org/Data/Profiles/Show.aspx?loc=148> (Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey).

¹⁴ *Id.*

districts to tackle this challenge would be a critically important and effective tool in Maryland's efforts to eliminate the achievement gap.

In a recent article, "From Ferguson to Baltimore: The consequences of government-sponsored segregation," Richard Rothstein reminds us of a lineage of government-sanctioned policies and practices that served to cement racial and class divisions in Baltimore. He encourages readers to "deal with the underlying problems."¹⁵ We think EDCo begins to do just that, while also allowing regions, districts, and schools the flexibility and autonomy to implement solutions that fit their unique context.

How the Proposed Maryland EDCo Supports Diversity in Schools

The NCSD believes the creation of an entity like EDCo could be instrumental in constructively addressing the harmful effects of racial and socioeconomic isolation—while also promoting innovation and twenty-first century skills in exciting new ways—in Maryland's schools by:

- 1) providing a definitive point of contact, support, leadership, and technical assistance for educators seeking to foster integration and prepare Maryland's children to contribute to a knowledge-based, high-skill economy in an increasingly diverse, interconnected society;
- 2) creating a strong community of practice, through compiling and disseminating best practices,¹⁶ thereby increasing the chances of success of voluntary regional, district, and school-level integration efforts;
- 3) leveraging the resources and knowledge of—and encouraging collaboration between—the state and critical partners such as private businesses and nonprofits, universities, labor unions, and government with the potential to provide an aligned, efficient, and community-driven response that compliments Maryland's other reform efforts.
- 4) developing a model for inclusive and racially/economically integrated interdistrict magnet schools in Maryland that do not use competitive admission requirements to admit students, but rather use strong marketing and weighted lotteries to reflect the demographic profile of the low income neighborhoods that some of the students will be drawn from.

We strongly support the efforts of forward-thinking educators and policymakers who are trying to find innovative ways to encourage and strengthen voluntary integration efforts in their states. An important first step is creating infrastructures to help facilitate this work, and creating linkages between those working in the fields of education, housing, transportation, health, and so forth. To further support this crucially collaborative work we strongly suggest the EDCo board be designed in a way that reserves seats for representatives from teachers unions, transit, fair housing, and the health professions. With this structure we believe EDCo would be an asset to the State Board, MSDE, and General Assembly's

¹⁵ Richard Rothstein, "From Ferguson to Baltimore: The consequences of government-sponsored segregation," (Washington Post, May 3, 2015), available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/05/03/from-ferguson-to-baltimore-the-consequences-of-government-sponsored-segregation>. See also Richard Rothstein, "From Ferguson to Baltimore: The Fruits of Government-Sponsored Segregation," (Economic Policy Institute: Working Economics Blog, 2015), available at <http://www.epi.org/blog/from-ferguson-to-baltimore-the-fruits-of-government-sponsored-segregation>; Richard Rothstein, *The Making of Ferguson: Public Policies at the Root of its Troubles* (Economic Policy Institute, 2014), available at <http://www.epi.org/files/2014/making-of-ferguson-final.pdf>.

¹⁶ The best practices EDCo would compile and disseminate relate to a range of issues that we know to be important in the context of creating integrated, inclusive, and equitable schools, including: "modern school designs, 21st Century curricula, positive school culture, and restorative discipline to promote socioeconomic and demographic diversity and 21st Century learning in schools in the State."

collective efforts to provide Maryland's students "a world class system [that prepares] all students for college and career success in the 21st century."¹⁷

We would be happy to meet with members of the Maryland Senate or House of Delegates to discuss this proposed entity, as well as the benefits of student diversity more generally, as you collect information that will help you make an informed decision about this proposal.

Sincerely,

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¹⁷ Maryland State Department of Education, Vision Statement, *available at* <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDe/stateboard/docs/StateBoardVisionandMission.pdf>.

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