

## ***Strength in Diversity Act of 2023***

*A historic proposal to support local communities in their efforts to desegregate public schools*

### **Background**

In the Supreme Court's landmark 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote: *In the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.*

Almost 70 years later, America's public schools are more segregated today than at any time since the 1960s. More than a third of public school students attend a racially segregated school. Even more concerning, a [recent government watchdog report](#) found that district secession—a process by which school districts break up into separate, smaller districts—has generally resulted in new schools with higher concentrations of white students and students from wealthier families.

Segregated schools promote inequity in education. In 2016, schools with predominantly children of color [received \\$23 billion less](#) than schools with predominantly white students, despite serving the same number of children. Students of color not only attend schools that are under-resourced, but they are also [disproportionately disciplined](#). In the 2015-16 school year, Black students accounted for 15 percent of all students, but 31 percent of referrals to law enforcement and school-based arrests.

Students attending diverse schools do better academically, because they gain access to the same resources as white students. The benefits from attending diverse schools continue into adulthood, including more integrated communities, higher levels of social cohesion, and reduced racial prejudice.

Districts across the country have implemented innovative strategies to address these issues, including developing state-of-the-art magnet schools, establishing open enrollment policies, or changing feeder patterns to promote diversity. However, many school districts lack the resources necessary to meaningfully address school segregation in their communities, including nearly 30 districts who applied for the Obama-era integration grant that Trump Administration [eliminated](#).

### **About the *Strength in Diversity Act of 2023***

The *Strength in Diversity Act of 2023* helps fulfill the promise of equity in education by offering support to districts that are developing, implementing, or expanding school diversity initiatives. The bill:

- Establishes a grant program that provides federal funding to support voluntary local efforts to increase diversity in schools. Grants could fund a range of proposals, including (but not limited to):
  - Studying segregation, evaluating current policies, and developing evidence-based plans to address socioeconomic and racial isolation.
  - Establishing public school choice zones, revising school boundaries, expanding equitable access to transportation for students, or improving open enrollment processes.
  - Creating or expanding innovative school programs that can attract students from outside the local area.
  - Recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers and improving teacher diversity.
- Supports the development and maintenance of best practices for grantees and experts in the field of school diversity.
- Grant funding would be available to school districts, independently or in collaboration with neighboring districts, as well as regional educational authorities and educational service agencies.

## ***Strength in Diversity Act of 2023 Endorsements***

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

American Federation of Teachers

Children's Defense Fund

Dudley Flood Center for Educational Equity and Opportunity

Education Law Center

Higher Education Consortium for Special Education

Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity at the University of Minnesota

Integrated Schools

Intercultural Development Research Association

Magnet Schools of America

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.

National Association of Elementary School Principals

National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector

National Coalition on School Diversity

National Education Association

New York Appleseed

North Carolina Justice Center

Poverty & Race Research Action Council

Public Advocacy for Kids

Sheff Movement Coalition

Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy based at Brandeis University

Southeast Asia Resource Action Center

Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children

The Bridges Collaborative at The Century Foundation

The Education Trust

Wayne County Community College District