

June 26, 2023

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Senator Jason Lewis, Senate Chair  
Representative Denise Garlick, House Chair  
Joint Committee on Education  
24 Beacon St.  
Room 473G  
Boston, MA 02133

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Dear Chairman Lewis, Chairwoman Garlick, and Members of the Committee,

As organizations committed to advancing educational equity and justice in Massachusetts, we appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the Educator Diversity Act.

Research consistently shows that a racially and culturally diverse teacher workforce benefits all students, regardless of race and ethnicity – but that is especially true for students of color and English learners, who often thrive in classrooms led by teachers who share their racial and cultural backgrounds. Teachers are the most important in-school factor contributing to student learning, and a diverse teacher workforce positively contributes to various student outcomes, including improved attendance rates, access to advanced coursework, more equitable discipline rates, and student academic achievement.

In Massachusetts, however, teachers of color make up just 10% of the teacher workforce (a figure that has barely budged in the last decade) while students of color make up nearly half of the student population. According to a recent analysis by The Education Trust, in 2019-20, nearly 40% of Massachusetts schools had no teachers of color. In addition, about 1 in 4 Black students and 1 in 5 Latinx students attended a school without a same-race teacher on staff – an experience that is all but unheard of for White students in our state.

Despite state and local efforts to build more robust pathways to teaching, people of color continue to be underrepresented in educator preparation programs. What's more, teachers of color are leaving the profession at far higher rates than their White counterparts. Data show that this school year, 23% of Black teachers and 22.1% of Latinx teachers left the workforce, compared to 15.4% of all teachers. These high attrition rates raise serious questions about the working environments our districts and schools are creating for educators of color and the students they serve.

The Educator Diversity Act takes a significant step forward by creating a policy framework that can help implement effective strategies to improve the recruitment and retention of more educators of color in districts across the state. We particularly support the requirements that:

- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) set measurable educator diversity goals and develop a dashboard with critical information such as “the hiring and retention of diverse educators, the racial demographics of educators who complete in-state educator preparation programs, and teacher qualification data from school and district report cards.
- Districts set measurable goals and develop and implement action plans to address core barriers to increasing educator diversity, such as discriminatory hiring practices and inequitable working conditions.

We appreciate, too, the emphasis on engaging educators, administrators, and students in decisions related to matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion through district educator diversity councils. To ensure that this requirement helps to elevate the voices of communities, particularly those affected by discriminatory practices, we urge you to:

- **Add parents or family caregivers to the list of required council members.** Parents and caregivers are particularly well-positioned to speak to the experiences of younger students, who may be unable to take part in the councils themselves; and
- **Require that educators, administrators, students, and parents/caregivers of color make up at least half of council members.**

Building a diverse teacher workforce is complex. This legislation alone cannot address the myriad barriers prospective and current educators of color face. Still, amid teacher shortages and declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs, it is a step in the right direction to help diversify the educator workforce and boost student outcomes by recruiting, supporting, and retaining more educators of color.

With deep gratitude for all that you do to support Massachusetts students, families, and educators,

*Black Advocates for  
Educational Excellence*

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