

October 18, 2021

Senator Jason Lewis, Senate Chair  
Representative Alice Hanlon Peisch, House Chair  
Joint Committee on Education  
MA State House  
Room 511-B  
Boston, MA 02133

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

As organizations committed to advancing education equity in Massachusetts, we appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of the Educator Diversity Act.

Having a racially and culturally diverse teacher workforce is beneficial for all P-12 students, and particularly for students of color and English learners, who often thrive in classrooms led by teachers [who share their racial and cultural backgrounds](#). In Massachusetts, however, teachers of color make up just [8.5% of the teacher workforce](#) — and that number has barely budged in the last decade. According to a [recent analysis by The Education Trust](#), 38% of Massachusetts schools — which serve nearly 30% of our state's students — have no teachers of color at all.

Despite some state and local efforts, 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. A [recent Department of Elementary and Secondary Education \(DESE\) analysis](#) showed that 24% of African American teachers and 17% of Latinx teachers left their district in 2016-17 — compared to 13% of all teachers. These high attrition rates raise serious questions about the working conditions in our districts and schools — and what those working conditions tell us about learning environments for students.

The Educator Diversity Act takes an important step forward by creating a policy framework that can help galvanize [efforts to improve both recruitment strategies and working conditions](#) 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 create 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” (Section 3).
- 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 (Section 4 (b)).

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 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.

Finally, we recognize that no one piece of legislation can address the myriad barriers faced by prospective and current educators of color. We believe that moving the Educator Diversity Act forward alongside legislation requiring all educators to be trained in culturally, responsive, anti-racist pedagogy (e.g., Section 4 of H.681) and advancing student access to racially and culturally inclusive curricula (e.g., H.3219/S.1965) would magnify the EDA's impact.

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

