



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

April 14, 2015

Mr. Philip Tegeler
Poverty and Race Research Action Council
1200 18th Street, NW, #200
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mr. Tegeler:

Thank you for your October 31, 2014, letter urging the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to consider issues of racial and socioeconomic isolation and segregation when renewing waivers under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA). I greatly appreciate the advocacy of the National Coalition on School Diversity on behalf of poor and minority children in America's schools. I am sending an identical response to the other signatories.

Equality of opportunity is a core American value, and one that can have little meaning unless our schools have the resources they need to help all students to succeed, regardless of family income or race. To accomplish this goal, all students must have equitable access to safe and healthy places to learn, high-quality instructional materials and supports, rigorous expectations and coursework, and, most critically, excellent educators to guide learning.

ED is currently pursuing these related goals through several important initiatives. First, the ESEA flexibility renewal guidance, issued on November 13, 2014, and the ESEA flexibility renewal FAQs, issued on December 15, 2014 (updated on March 12, 2015), continue ESEA flexibility's critical focus on improving educational outcomes for all students, closing achievement gaps, increasing equity, and improving the quality of instruction. As part of the State educational agency's (SEA's) process to ensure that schools are accountable for the performance of all groups of students, each SEA must demonstrate in its renewal request that a school may not receive the highest rating in the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system if significant gaps in achievement or graduation rates across subgroups are not closing in the school. As in the initial review process, the renewal process will ensure that each request approved by ED is consistent with the principles of ESEA flexibility, each of which is directly linked to improving educational equity.

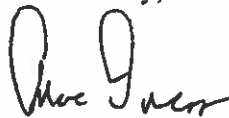
Second, ED's Excellent Educators for All initiative, which I announced on July 7, 2014, is specifically designed to move America toward the day when every student in every public school is taught by excellent educators. As part of the initiative, consistent with section 1111(b)(8)(C) of the ESEA, each SEA must submit to ED a State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators (State Plan) that ensures "poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers." State Plans are due on June 1, 2015.

Third, in response to your concern regarding the collection of data to measure racial segregation, please note that both the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) and *EDFacts* will continue to collect school enrollment data by race and ethnicity, as well as limited English proficiency and disability status, and make those data publicly available. The CRDC data make it possible to identify and determine the extent to which there are opportunity gaps between and among schools.

Additionally, ED's Office for Civil Rights issued guidance on October 1, 2014, in order to ensure that students have equal access to educational resources such as academic and extracurricular programs, strong teaching, technology and instructional materials, and safe school facilities without regard to race, color, or national origin. This was done so that all children have an equal opportunity to succeed in school, careers, and in life. This guidance and other resources are available at: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/resourcecomparability.html>.

Thank you again for your letter and for your strong support of meaningful efforts to improve educational opportunities for those students who have been neglected by our education system for far too long. As I said in my January 12, 2015, speech on ESEA reauthorization, "Educational opportunity cannot be optional for any child anywhere in this country." I look forward to working with you and other members of the National Coalition on School Diversity to confirm that educational opportunity is a fundamental civil right for all of America's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arne Duncan". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Arne Duncan