

PRESS RELEASE

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Washington, DC—The National Coalition on School Diversity (www.school-diversity.org) applauds Acting U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. for taking steps to address economic and racial isolation in American schools.

The Obama administration's 2017 budget, released yesterday, includes a \$120 million request for “Stronger Together,” a new competitive funding program that would offer planning and implementation grants for voluntary, community-developed socioeconomic integration plans. According to the proposed budget, Stronger Together funds would support “comprehensive socioeconomic integration strategies,” to include: changes to attendance boundaries and student assignment policies; the establishment of schools that attract students from diverse backgrounds; community outreach and engagement efforts; faculty/staff recruitment, hiring, and training efforts; and activities designed to mitigate within-school segregation, etc.

We are also optimistic about the Administration’s requested budget increase for the Magnet Schools Assistance Program, which would be set aside to fund “a new competition giving priority to applicants proposing to make socioeconomic diversity a central factor in their efforts to increase racial integration.”¹ Our coalition members have long advocated for funding increases for the Magnet Schools Assistance Program, and we continue to believe that efforts to promote racial and economic diversity should go hand in hand.

The Administration’s 2017 budget demonstrates a solid understanding of the research base that supports the use of integration strategies. Studies consistently show that racially, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse schools are strongly associated with a range of short and long term benefits for all racial groups. This includes gains in math, science, reading, and critical thinking skills and improvements in graduation rates. Research also demonstrates that diverse schools are better equipped than high-poverty schools to counteract the negative effects of poverty. 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. They possess better critical thinking skills and analytical ability and are more likely to form cross-racial friendships.²

¹ See <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget17/justifications/f-ii.pdf> at F-81.

² National Coalition on School Diversity Research Brief 5, School Integration and K-12 Educational Outcomes: A Quick Synthesis of Social Science Evidence, available at <http://www.school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo5.pdf>.

NCSD Member Responses to “Stronger Together” Program:

“We commend the administration for recognizing what the well-documented education research shows – that economic and racial diversity are a very important, positive means of increasing achievement for all children.”

—John Brittain, Professor of Law, UDC David A. Clarke School of Law (Washington, DC)

“New York Appleseed is thrilled to see Acting U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. continue to lead on this fundamental issue facing the nation’s schools. More than ever, we need proactive policy to prepare our children to live, work, and participate in an increasingly diverse America.”

—David Tipson, Executive Director, NY Appleseed (New York, NY)

"Our country's unique history of racial and socioeconomic segregation in education requires programming to help mitigate the effects of decades of educational inequities fostered through separate and unequal educational systems. We applaud the Stronger Together program and funding of magnet schools, but urge funding of programs targeted at mitigating racial and housing segregation that have undermined the educational opportunities of too many of our nation's students of color."

—Janel George, Senior Education Policy Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund (Washington, DC)

“For years there has been a research consensus that school integration by socioeconomic status and race is a powerful way to improve education but a political consensus that it's impossible to take on this issue. Today, with the administration's ‘Stronger Together’ proposal, that political taboo has been shattered and students everywhere stand to benefit.”

—Richard D. Kahlenberg, Senior Fellow, The Century Foundation (Washington, DC)

“We applaud the President’s investment in educational opportunities for all students and his acknowledgement that racially integrated learning environments are essential to educational excellence.”

—Elaine Gross, President, ERASE Racism (Long Island, NY)

“We are pleased to see the Department emphasize community engagement and involvement in the Stronger Together program—voluntary school integration efforts are most effective when communities come together to develop the political will to devise and implement strategies that respond to their unique context.”

—Philip Tegeler, Executive Director, Poverty & Race Research Action Council (Washington, DC)

*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.*