**Sample letter to State Education Leader**

Dear **NAME**,

As a civil rights organization, **ORGANIZATION NAME** has been pursuing the fight for equitable schools in **CITY/STATE/OUR COMMUNITY** for over **YEARS OF OPERATION.** **BRIEF ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND, SUMMARY OF EDUCATION WORK.** As a member of the National Coalition on School Diversity (see school-diversity.org), we believe that integration by race and socioeconomic status is one of the most important steps **SEA** could take under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and implore **the SEA** to seriously consider:

Including Progress Toward Racial and Socioeconomic Integration as a Factor in the Statewide Accountability System. A significant body of evidence indicates that racial segregation and poverty concentration are systematically linked to unequal educational opportunities, and are “strongly related to an array of factors that limit educational opportunities and outcomes….[including] less experienced and less qualified teachers, high levels of teacher turnover, less successful peer groups and inadequate facilities and learning materials.”[[1]](#footnote-1) While there are limited examples of high-poverty, racially isolated schools that consistently demonstrate academic success, as a whole, school segregation tends to prevent our most vulnerable students from receiving the education they deserve.[[2]](#footnote-2) Due to the clear and significant negative impact racial and poverty concentration have on student outcomes, SEAs should focus on reducing student isolation and factor progress toward integration and student diversity into their accountability systems.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Including Strategies for Fostering Racial and Socioeconomic Integration as State-Determined, Evidence-Based Title I Interventions. Studies consistently show that racially, culturally, and economically diverse schools are strongly associated with a range of short and long term benefits for all racial groups.[[4]](#footnote-4) This includes gains in math, science, reading, and critical thinking skills and improvements in graduation rates.[[5]](#footnote-5) Research also demonstrates that diverse schools are better equipped than high-poverty schools to counteract the negative effects of poverty.[[6]](#footnote-6) 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.[[7]](#footnote-7) They possess better critical thinking skills and analytical ability and are more likely to form cross-racial friendships.[[8]](#footnote-8) In light of the numerous benefits associated with diverse, integrated schools, SEAs should consider programs designed to foster greater integration as evidence-based Title I interventions.

ESSA includes the requirement that state education agencies engage in "timely and meaningful consultation" with a variety of stakeholders while developing many aspects of Title I plans, as well school accountability systems. As a group deeply concerned about equity in education, we ask to be included as a stakeholder in your planning for ESSA implementation. Specifically, we request the involvement of **PERSON(S)** from our organization during **the SEA'**s school accountability system development and state-determined Title I intervention development.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

**[ORGANIZATION PRESIDENT/CEO]**

1. Gary Orfield et al., *E Pluribus… Separation: Deepening Double Segregation for More Students* (Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, 2012), 21, available at http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/mlk-national/e-pluribus...separationdeepening-double-segregation-for-more-students/orfield\_epluribus\_revised\_omplete\_2012.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Douglas N. Harris, Ending the Blame Game on Educational Inequity: A Study of "High Flying" Schools and NCLB (Arizona State University, 2006), retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED508527.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. New York City recently released its first report on school diversity efforts in response to the School Diversity Accountability Act passed by the City Council in 2014. Both the report and the School Diversity Accountability Act should prove useful to SEAs exploring how to include progress toward integration as an accountability factors. See the report at <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/city/publicaffairs/KeyDocuments/default.htm>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For a summary of this research, see Roslyn Mickelson, “School Integration and K-12 Educational Outcomes: A Quick Synthesis of Social Science Evidence,” (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2015), available at http://www.school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo5.pdf; Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, "How Non-Minority Students Also Benefit from Racially Diverse Schools," (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2012), available at http://school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo8.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For a summary of this research, see Susan Eaton, “School Racial and Economic Composition & Math and Science Achievement,” (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2011), available at http://www.school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo1.pdf; Susan Eaton, "How the Racial and Socioeconomic Composition of Schools and Classrooms Contributes to Literacy, Behavioral Climate, Instructional Organization and High School Graduation Rates," (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2011), available at http://schooldiversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo2.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For a summary of this research, see Philip Tegeler, Roslyn Mickelson, and Martha Bottia, “What We Know about School Integration, College Attendance, and the Reduction of Poverty,” (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2011), available at http://schooldiversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo4.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For a summary of this research, see Susan Eaton and Gina Chirichigno, “The Impact of Racially Diverse Schools in a Democratic Society,” (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2011), available at http://www.school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo3.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Supra* note 1. *See also* Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, "How Non-Minority Students Also Benefit from Racially Diverse Schools," (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2012), available at http://school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo8.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)