

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON FAIR HOUSING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

PREPARED REMARKS

**The Importance of High Quality Public Education  
In Integrated Neighborhoods**

*Thank you Commissioners and event organizers for inviting me to speak here today on the very important topic of housing and education – particularly on the impact of residential segregation on students, schools, and our nation’s educational system.*

*My talk will have three parts:*

- 1. First, I will provide a context for this issue by describing striking levels of school segregation across the nation and how metropolitan changes, and the lack of affordable, high quality housing, are impacting, if not driving, this increasing segregation – and re-segregation – of our public schools.*
  - 2. Next, I discuss the consequences of segregation on students, teachers, schools and districts – as well as the benefits of greater integration*
  - 3. Third, I share a range of innovative strategies bringing housing and educational policies together in important ways to provide new options and opportunities aimed at bringing greater levels of integration across America’s schools and neighborhoods.*
- ***To my first point:*** *Effects of half a century of metropolitan expansion and demographic change have been increasing racial and economic segregation, with poverty concentrated in older neighborhoods and their schools. Evidence from the Civil Rights Project at UCLA reveals many of these changes:*
    - *Overall, our student population is far more diverse: While in the early 1960s, 9/10th of our student population was white, today they represent only 59% of students - a 20% drop. At the same time, Black student populations rose 33% and Latinos – a surging 380% due to increasing immigration of a young population with high birth rates.*
    - *Rather than lead to further diversity within our schools, however, Black and Latino students are more segregated than they have been since the 1960s.*

- *We are in fact in the last decade of white majority in American schools – already white students are the minorities in two of our national largest regions in the West and South.*
- *Schools are not only becoming less white but also have rising proportions of students living in poverty – noted by increases in students who qualify for Free and Reduced lunch.*
- *Even in the South, where desegregation has seen the greatest impact for Black populations, schools are re-segregating at alarming rates – due in part to recent Supreme Court decisions limiting the ability of school districts to implement desegregation policies.*

*What is driving this increasing segregation? This issue is complex, and multifaceted, but it is clear that housing plays a major role.*

*Two inter-related trends are particularly important in understanding the relationship between housing and education, what we call the "housing-school nexus":*

2. *On a regional level, decades of metropolitan expansion and demographic change just described, have led to increasing racial and economic segregation in both older neighborhoods and their schools leading to a bi-furcated educational system of "good" suburban schools" and "failing" city schools. This has become even more complex with increasing levels of high poverty communities in the suburbs – with accompanying levels of poverty concentrated schools*

**ADD SOME OF THE ARTICLE DATA HERE – homebuyers see school quality as key to residential choices and decision making**

- **Range of econometric modeling studies showing evidence of this relationship**
  - **But only really a "choice" for some**
    - **NFHA data about white families being steered to neighborhoods based on school quality, which serves as a proxy for race. Realtors didn't even discuss school quality with Black and Latino families**
3. *Affordable housing, even in inner cities and first-ring suburbs is becoming scarce, often because of rising housing costs, new immigration, lack of federal commitment to affordable housing policies, and/or gentrification. As a result there are higher levels of transient families moving from community to community – and school to school – when they find themselves priced out of markets where they live. This leads to increased student turnover and school instability.*

- ADD ARTICLE DATA HERE – rates of moving for negative reasons is at 50% for high minority, low income families

**POINT #2:**

*I will explain in the next part of my presentation how both of these trends - metropolitan growth and the lack of affordable housing - have severe consequences for students, teachers and their schools and districts. I will add that there is a wide range of evidence of these effects but with a short time allotted, I will share only a few key examples.*

- ***For students***, educational achievement is strongly impacted by the racial and income composition of the student body. Evidence shows how majority white schools have far higher graduation and college admissions rates while schools with higher minority and low income students have escalating drop out rates.
  - *One study on the Drop Out crisis in America revealed only about 2/3 of all students – and only half of all Blacks, Latinos and Native Americans – who enter 9th grade graduate with regular diplomas 4 years later.*
  - *Possibly add discussion of Gateaux Research here – how students were moved to more integrated schools with higher white populations and better performing schools (unlike larger MTO demo program modeled on this successful work which only moved families to different census tracks but not higher performing or integrated schools or districts)*
- *Families and students are also impacted by poor housing conditions in highly segregated schools. Research shows how issues ranging from exposure to environmental hazards to overcrowding and noise - hinder academic achievement and students' ability to perform well in school.*
  - *Try performing well on all these high stakes tests when you don't have basic nutritional needs - such as breakfast - eyeglasses to read or health concerns from asthma to obesity.*
- ***For teachers and classrooms***, segregated, minority schools have trouble attracting and retaining credentialed and experienced teachers, have higher teacher turn over rates, and larger class size.
  - *They also must work with far fewer educational resources including updated books, technology and other modern teaching tools*

- *Another important factor not raised as often - but equally important – stemming from the lack of affordable housing is that teachers themselves are often priced out of housing markets leading to more frequent teacher turn over and school instability.*

*In addition to the impacts on students and teachers, segregated, minority schools also have significant impacts on schools and their districts.*

***For public school administrators,*** *segregation of minority and low income populations presents complex and intertwined challenges.*

*Historically, local property taxes have been the major source of funding for public schools, so the relative wealth or poverty of a surrounding community has a direct impact on basic school operations – from teacher salaries to school facility infrastructure.*

- *A 2006 study conducted by the Center for Cities and Schools and the Ford Funded BEST Collaborative, Growth and Disparity – a Decade of Public School Construction – revealed historic levels of construction spending (over \$600 billion across the nation in the past decade) yet extreme disparity in where these investments are happening - with low income, largely minority school districts spending the least – nearly half as much.*

*While these statistics are sobering, I don't want to end this analysis on only the negative consequences of school segregation. It is equally, if not more important, for us to recognize the increasing evidence of the benefits of integration as well.*

- *A Statement of 553 social scientist submitted in the recent Supreme Court ruling - Parents Involved in Community Schools vrs. Seattle District reviews over 50 years of social science evidence of the benefits of school diversity as well as the harmful consequences.*

*Three often cited benefits of school integration include:*

- *Racially integrated schools promote cross-racial understanding in ways that are not possible in segregated school environments*
- *Racially integrated k-12 schools are responsible to prepare our nation's students (nearly 88% of whom attend public school) to be "global citizens" in our increasingly diverse society and world.*
- *Students in racially integrated schools enhance students' learning, expand their future opportunities and benefit society at large.*

**ADD SOME STUFF HERE – FROM BRIEF SUMMARY, BOOK – DIFFERENCE – AND ?? THIS ALL RIGHT FROM CRC - ORFIELD**

**POINT #3 –**

*My final point today builds on the important recognition of the benefits and importance of school integration*

*I will review three innovative, strategies bringing housing and educational policies together in important ways to provide new options and opportunities aimed at bringing greater levels of integration across America's schools and neighborhoods.*

*First, housing and community redevelopment leaders are recognizing the importance of school quality to realize their goals of creating mixed income communities.*

- *One of the better known examples of this is by the award-winning housing developer Richard Baron and the Urban Strategies non-profit arm which has done considerable work with HOPE VI communities in different parts of the country to integrate new schools into re-development plans.*
- *Other prominent economic development intermediaries such as Enterprise Community Partners and LISC are also seeking out ways to integrate education into their housing policies and work.*
  - *Enterprise recently published a report called, School-Oriented Redevelopment, encouraging housing developers to integrate the needs and interests of education in their plans*
- *In the Bay Area, Mayor Gavin Newsom has launched HOPE SF, also based on HOPE VI – particularly the earlier community building model put in place by Commissioner Cisneros - placing education as a central part of this strategy.*
  - *SF MOH goal is to create high quality school options for new and existing families in these redeveloped Bayview/Hunters Point neighborhoods.*

*A second area of increasing attention and opportunity to connect school and housing are alternative assignment policies such as Magnet schools, charters, and diversity plans.*

- *One note of caution is that while many advocates of charters claim to have the explicit goals and intentions of creating more diversity research – such as that being conducted by Commissioner Myron Orfield – also reveals how charters are*

*playing a significant role in the re-segregation of communities.*

*A third and final area of innovative work I want to mention - and one central to the above mentioned policies ability to have sustainable impact - is the need for regional level, systems-change, leadership development and capacity building for civic and education leaders and policy makers alike.*

- *While attention to the relationship between housing and education is increasing, there are also considerable obstacles that stem from decades of isolated and "solo" practices between housing/civic institutions and public education. While the often "intuitive" need to work together is apparent, there is little history or know-how for these public entities to collaborate.*
  - *If anything, schools and the cities they operate in have hostile or strained relationships due to competing regulations, finances and completely independent governance structures with little to no accountability to each other.*
- *All leaders, not just a few above mentioned visionaries, need to see the mutual advantages in connecting housing and educational policy and recognize their role in making this happen.*
  - *One example of an effort to change the status quo at a systems-level, is the PLUS leadership initiative at the Center for Cities and Schools. We bring together civic and educational leaders from 6 Bay Area cities and districts to craft mutually beneficial policies and practices at both the professional and pre-professional levels.*
  - *Another regional level example is the attention of school quality to the smart growth community – "smart schools policy" aiming to prevent what has become to be known as "school sprawl".*

*To conclude, I ask that this Commission and future leaders in the fair housing and equal rights community continue to ask the central questions of:*

- *How can housing policy support greater school integration and likewise, how can educational policy support greater neighborhood integration.*

*As this past June marks one year after the supreme court ruled on school desegregation, it is important to recognize that while this decision did make a serious dent in voluntary, race based desegregation policies, it also reinforced the importance of integration and the "spirit" of Brown v Bd of Education.*

*I will close with a quote from Justice Kennedy's deciding opinion:*

*This nation has a moral and ethical obligation to fulfill its historic commitment to creating an integrated society that ensures equal opportunity of all of its children ... the decision today should not prevent school districts from continuing the important work of bringing together students of different, ethnic and economic backgrounds.*

Justice Kennedy's words, coupled with the striking levels of segregation and poverty concentration occurring across our cities and public schools, is an urgent call to action for urban/metropolitan and educational leaders alike.

*Thanks you commissioners and everyone for giving me this time.*