

February 21, 2023

Dr. Miguel Cardona, Secretary of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Re: Reissuance of interagency guidance on housing and school integration

Dear Secretary Cardona,

In 2016, your predecessor at the Department, Secretary John King, joined the Secretaries of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development in signing a joint letter to state and local housing, transportation and education agencies all across the country, urging them to work together to help to promote racial and economic integration in schools and communities. This joint letter was framed around HUD's 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule, but it was also premised on the commitments that all three agencies shared.

We are writing to urge you to again join your fellow Secretaries in a renewed letter urging your state and local counterpart agencies to work together to promote more equitable and integrated communities and schools. The Department of Education is obligated to avoid policies that perpetuate segregation under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. These obligations have been reinforced by President Biden's recent Executive Orders on racial equity<sup>1</sup> and by earlier administrations' Executive Orders, including Executive Order 12892, January 17, 1994.<sup>2</sup> Your discretionary funding priorities published in 2021 also included support for school integration, and collaboration across agency silos.<sup>3</sup>

The [2016 interagency letter](#) included several excellent recommendations for state and local education agencies, which we have adapted below to incorporate more recent evidence and best practices:

> Develop strategies for drawing school attendance boundaries,<sup>4</sup> selecting sites for new schools, and the use of open and inclusive enrollment practices in schools, including charter schools or magnet schools, with a specific aim of providing equal access to high-quality schools and increasing the diversity of the community served by these schools.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Executive Order 13985, "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government" (January 20, 2021); "Executive Order on Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through The Federal Government" (February 16, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/WCPD-1994-01-24/pdf/WCPD-1994-01-24-Pg110.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/12/10/2021-26615/final-priorities-and-definitions-secretarys-supplemental-priorities-and-definitions-for>.

<sup>4</sup> See Siegel-Hawley, G., Taylor, K., Bridges, K., Frankenberg, E., Castro, A., Williams, S. & Haden, S., *School Segregation by Boundary Line in Virginia: Scope, Significance and State Policy Solutions*. State College, PA/Richmond, VA: Center for Education and Civil Rights/Virginia Commonwealth University School of Education (2020). Siegel-Hawley, G., Castro, A. J., Bridges, K., & Taylor, K. (2021). "Race and School Rezoning Criteria," *Contexts* 20(3), 72–75 (2021), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/15365042211035348>.

<sup>5</sup> Evidence-based practices to ensure that magnet schools are both diverse and effective include incorporation of integration into school design, mission, structure, and goals; intentional and ongoing family outreach and engagement; implementation of inclusive enrollment practices; and provision of free transportation. To ensure full inclusion within the school, evidence-based practices include culturally responsive curriculum and instruction; staff who are prepared to teach students from different backgrounds and cultures in heterogeneous classrooms; ongoing

- > Consult with state, regional and local transportation agencies, housing authorities and housing development agencies when engaging in school site planning to ensure it is informed by commuter pattern analysis,<sup>6</sup> maximizes accessibility to high-performing schools for diverse populations and high need students, and ensures safe passage to school for students.
- > Work with state, regional, and local transportation and housing agencies to share important information on school achievement, graduation rates, demographic composition, and attendance zone boundaries to create housing and schools that best address the unique needs of students, families, and communities and expand access to an excellent education.

In addition to the excellent recommendations made by the Department in 2016, we hope you will consider including the following suggestions to your Department’s state and local partners:

- > Support magnet school siting and admissions policies that open up more educational opportunities for public housing resident children, including in public housing redevelopment efforts such as the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative and the Rental Assistance Demonstration.<sup>7</sup>
- > Ensure that children impacted by school closings have enhanced access to high performing schools in their region, including schools in low poverty neighborhoods and Full Service Community Schools.
- > Increased coordination between school districts and regional housing mobility programs to maximize success for children moving from high poverty to low poverty neighborhoods.<sup>8</sup>
- > Development of regional planning committees to envision coordination of school, housing and transportation systems to support increased racial and economic integration.<sup>9</sup>

Thank you for your considerations of these recommendations. We also hope that the Department will begin to engage in more formal partnership with your counterparts at DOT and HUD, to

---

professional development opportunities for staff; and nondiscriminatory, restorative discipline practices. George, J., & Darling-Hammond, L., *Advancing integration and equity through magnet schools* (Learning Policy Institute, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> See Orfield, M., & Stancil, W., *Magnet schools and metropolitan civil rights planning: A strategy to revitalize and stabilize distressed communities* (Learning Policy Institute, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.54300/197.312>.

<sup>7</sup> The Department has recently emphasized this point in an “invitational priority” for the MSAP program, but the priority should also be accompanied by additional points in the competitive grants process to encourage collaboration. See <https://www.prrac.org/connecting-magnet-schools-and-public-housing-redevelopment-january-2023-update/>.

<sup>8</sup> See *Housing Mobility Programs in the U.S. 2022* (PRRAC and Mobility Works December 2022), <https://www.prrac.org/housing-mobility-programs-in-the-u-s-2022-december-2022/>. See also HUD’s new Community Choice Demonstration, currently supporting mobility programs in nine U.S. metro areas, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/communitychoicedemo](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/communitychoicedemo).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the Obama Administration’s Sustainable Communities Initiative, which brought regional transportation and housing agencies together in a federally-funded planning process, but failed to include local school districts. See <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/sci/>.

work together to address the challenges of concentrated poverty and racial isolation in our nation's schools. We would welcome further dialogue with you and other Department staff.

Sincerely,

Philip Tegeler  
Darryn Mumphery  
Poverty & Race Research Action Council (PRRAC)  
Washington, DC  
(ptegeler@prrac.org)

Halley Potter  
Stefan Lallinger  
Lara Adekeye  
The Bridges Collaborative at The Century Foundation  
New York, NY

Gina Chirichigno  
National Coalition on School Diversity  
Washington, DC  
Myron Orfield  
Will Stancil  
Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity  
Minneapolis, MN

Hannah Mannion  
Nestquest  
Houston, TX

Ariel Bierbaum  
University of Maryland  
College Park, MD  
(Institution listed for identification purposes only)

Alisha N. Butler  
Wesleyan University  
Middletown, CT  
(Institution listed for identification purposes only)

Elizabeth H. DeBray  
Mary Frances Early College of Education  
University of Georgia  
Athens, GA  
(Institution listed for identification purposes only)

Kara S. Finnigan  
University of Michigan  
Ann Arbor, Michigan  
(Institution listed for identification purposes only)

Erica Frankenberg  
Penn State University  
University Park, PA  
(Institution listed for identification purposes only)

Genevieve Siegel-Hawley  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
Richmond, VA  
(Institution listed for identification purposes only)

cc: Roberto Rodriguez  
Catherine Lhamon  
Monique Dixon  
Kayla Patrick