

NAACP Task Force on Quality Education
July 2017 / HEARING REPORT



QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL...
ONE SCHOOL AT A TIME

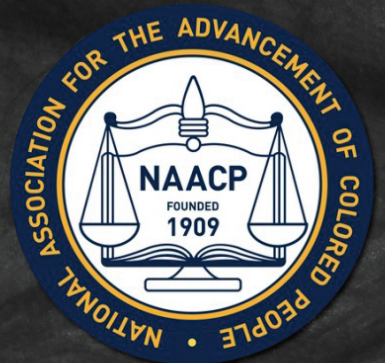


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LEON W. RUSSELL
Board Chair

July 26, 2017

ALICE HUFFMAN
Chair

Honorable Leon Russell
Chairman, Board of Directors,
National Association for The Advancement of Colored People
4805 Mt. Hope Drive,
Baltimore, Maryland 21215

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

MICHAEL CURRY

HAZEL DUKES

SCOT X. ESDAILE

Dear Chairman Russell:

JAMES GALLMAN

The NAACP Task Force on Quality Education is pleased to present its final report to the Board members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). This report would not have been possible without support from you, the vice chairman and the entire National Board. The Task Force members are also grateful to Chair Emeritus Rosalyn Brock for her vision and leadership in creating and selecting its members.

JOHN JACKSON

DERRICK JOHNSON

DA'QUAN LOVE

We are thankful for the opportunity to work on one of the board's most significant issues, public education. We urge you to make this a living NAACP action plan with a mandate and roadmap for saving America's public schools by advocating for public quality education in every sector. With the work of this task force, we are well-placed at the center of the education reform movement, and the public awaits our subsequent actions. Therefore, as you receive this report, the task force members are recommending several follow up items:

ADORA OBI NWEZE

PETER ROSE

GLORIA SWEET-LOVE

ROBIN WILLIAMS

1. Immediately develop goals and create a plan of action around the recommendations.
2. Create a new, formal alliance of like-minded national groups to work in coalition with us - a National Alliance for Quality Education.
3. Convene mass meetings across the country in conjunction with our local units to communicate to the public and local policymakers in an effort to gain support for our goals.
4. Seek immediate dialogue and negotiations to have the recommendations of the report recognized and fulfilled with national policymakers - including the President, his appointees and members of Congress.
5. Strategize on how to finance this action and keep it alive until we accomplish our goals.

Under your direction, we look forward to continuing this work with the Board in the implementation of the recommendations and the development of future strategies.

Again, on behalf of the task force members, thank you. It was indeed a privilege and honor to serve the board and this nation at such a critical time.

Sincerely,

Alice Huffman, *Chair*
Derrick Johnson, *Vice Chair of the Board*
Adora Obi Nweze, Hazel Dukes, *Task Force Vice Chairs*
Task Force Members: Gloria Jean Sweet-Love, Da'Quan Love, Scot X Esdale,

PREFACE

In July 2016, during the 107th National Convention, delegates unanimously passed a Resolution calling for a moratorium on charter school expansion until there is accountability and transparency in their operations.

At the October 2016 NAACP Board of Directors Meeting, the Board adopted the Resolution and the Chair, with Board approval created the 12-member Charter School Task Force. After the November General Election, based upon the United States President-Elect's campaign promise to expand privatization of public education, the officers were concerned that the 1954 *Brown versus Board of Education* victory that promised a quality education for all was at risk. As a result, the NAACP Board of Directors expanded the Task Force work to include protection of quality public education for all inner-city children. Thus, the Task Force was renamed to be the Task Force on Quality Education.

The Task Force agreed to hold hearings across the country and speak directly to educators of traditional district schools as well as charter schools and report the findings to the NAACP National Board of Directors. The Task Force believes the report will serve as a guide to the future direction the NAACP should take to preserve public quality education for all children in America.

Seven public Hearings were held around the country from December 2016 through April 2017. The hearing format ensured that testimony came from educators, administrators, school policy experts, charter school leaders, parents, advocates, community leaders and students to gain insight into public education. The seven cities selected as hearing locations were; New Haven, Memphis, Orlando, Los Angeles, Detroit, New Orleans and New York.

Findings and future actions are contained in the attached report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Here's the moral walk: That the same quality and equity that a child would receive in Bloomfield Hills is guaranteed for every child in the city of Detroit... that we insist a system, not hodgepodes of opportunity, but a comprehensive system for all children. We started to ensure that all children are provided a quality education... That was the promise of Brown versus the Board of Education.... Now, the moral voice, Proverbs 31:8, asks: "Who will speak for those who cannot speak for themselves?" Vice President Derrick Johnson (Detroit Hearing)

"Can charter schools be part of the solution? Absolutely! But that solution must be intentional, well-planned growth that takes into account the health and sustainability of the entire public education system, including the so-called traditional public schools that educate 90% of our country's students". Chris Ungar, Past President, of the California School Boards Association and Former Special Education Director in the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education. (Los Angeles Hearing)

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has always advocated for quality education of African American children as the gateway to economic prosperity and to become fully contributing citizens of society. This belief led to the NAACP sponsored lawsuit filed by Thurgood Marshall, *Brown v. Board of Education*, which ruled in NAACP's favor and ended the "legal" separate but equal doctrine relegating Black students to inferior schools. Over the years, quality education continued to be a focus of the National NAACP's program. Delegates in many conventions passed resolutions seeking solutions to the public schools' failure to yield a quality education to African American and other children of color. In July 2016, The NAACP Board of Directors approved a national resolution calling for a moratorium on the expansion of charter schools until more transparency and accountability in their operations can be achieved.

A media storm of pros and cons followed the delegates' approval of the resolution, and the Board of Directors, in October 2016, created a Task Force on Charter Schools and later expanded its charge to examine the quality of education for children of color in inner city schools. The Task Force's mission was to make recommendations to the Board of Directors on policy and actions needed to improve the quality of education for all children of color being educated with public funds and to ensure the sustainability of an effective public education system for all children.

Twelve NAACP board members were selected to serve on the Task Force. Those twelve members are State Conference Presidents, former educators, school administrators, school board members, labor representatives, and a charter school leader. Between December 2016 and April 2017, the NAACP Task Force on Quality Education convened seven hearings in major urban cities in America. The hearings were held in New Haven, Memphis, Orlando, Los Angeles, Detroit, New Orleans and New York. After more than 50 hours of public testimony in seven cities, the Task Force heard different messages at each community meeting, where over 250 persons were in attendance at each hearing. In order to ensure a balanced presentation, each hearing featured testimony from charter proponents and charter opponents, traditional public school advocates, community leaders, education policy experts, members of the community, and several students and their parents.

Findings

Charter schools were created with more flexibility because they were expected to innovate and infuse new ideas and creativity into the traditional public school system. However, this aspect of the promise never materialized.

Many traditional inner city public schools are failing the children who attend them, thus causing parents with limited resources to search for a funded, quality educational alternative for their children.

Forty-three states and the District of Columbia have different approaches for overseeing charter schools, varying in who can serve as authorizers of charter schools, how they fund charters, and how they govern charter schools.

Charter schools are publicly funded, but they are privately operated under a written contract (or charter) with a state, school district or other authorizers depending on the state.

With the expansion of charter schools and their concentration in low-income communities, concerns have been raised within the African American community about the quality, accessibility and accountability of some charters, as well as their broader effects on the funding and management of school districts that serve most students of color.

State charter laws are different and unique to each state. For example, in Tennessee, for-profit charters are not allowed. While in Michigan, for-profit charters are expanding. Charter schools generally have flexibility from many laws and regulations that govern traditional public schools.

There are many types of charter schools. Some charters are closely affiliated with school districts, others operate independently, and many are part of a network of schools that may span many school districts. Some are for-profit, run by education management organizations (or EMO's), which can be nonprofit or for-profit.

For some, charter schools provide the answer to persistently failing traditional public schools in their community. To others, charter schools drain their community of limited resources and harm their children because many cannot attend the charter schools in their own neighborhood.

There were pros and cons on charters versus traditional schools in every hearing. The Task Force heard testimony that accused charters schools of “cherry-picking” students, counseling out the difficult students, manipulating funds related to average daily attendance (ADA) once students were no longer in attendance, and re-segregating the public school system. Conversely, charter school advocates criticized the traditional school system for its poor record in educating students. In every hearing, many people agreed that the current education system fails too many children because of the lack of investment in people, policies and programs that support high quality educational opportunities.

Consequently, each hearing’s participants emphasized the need to protect students from failing schools and create more high quality schools, regardless of the school’s structure.

A school leader at the Los Angeles hearing captured the sentiment, “we must celebrate success wherever it is happening and we must remain vigilant to guard against abuses of the public trust wherever they occur. A bad school is our common enemy”.

Hearing presenters in Detroit and New York warned that having too many charter schools in some communities, while neighborhood schools are shut down, contribute to a chaotic educational system for many families of color living in low income areas.

In Memphis and New Orleans, local elected school leaders stressed the importance of the state playing a strong role in authorizing, funding and governing charter schools so that ALL students, families and schools receive the necessary resources to educate the community’s children.

Furthermore, while high quality, accountable and accessible charters can contribute to educational opportunity, by themselves, even the best charters are not a substitute for more stable, adequate and equitable investments in public education in the communities that serve our children.

Multiple parents and community members described the need for the state or district to govern all schools—traditional and charter—so that there’s one system of democratically-accountable, high-quality schools.

Recommendations to the NAACP Board of Directors

The Task Force recommends the following:

- **More equitable and adequate funding for all schools serving students of color.** Education funding has been inadequate and unequal for students of color for hundreds of years. The United States has one of the most unequal school funding systems of any country in the industrialized world. Resources are highly unequal across states, across districts, and across schools, and they have declined in many communities over the last decade. In 36 states, public school funding has not yet returned to pre-2008 levels-before the great recession, and in many states, inner city schools have experienced the deepest cuts. Federal funds have also declined in real dollar terms for both Title I and for special education expenditures over the last decade.
- **School finance reform is needed.**
To solve the quality education problems that are at the root of many of the issues, school finance reform is essential to ensure that resources are allocated according to student needs. States should undertake the kinds of weighted student formula reforms that Massachusetts and California have pursued, and the federal government should fully enforce the funding-equity provisions in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
- **Invest in low-performing schools and schools with significant opportunity to close the achievement gap.**
Students learn in safe, supportive, and challenging learning environments under the tutelage of well-prepared, caring adults. Participants in every hearing stressed the importance of the type of classroom investments that have consistently been shown to raise student achievement. To ensure that all students receive a high-quality education, federal, state, and local policies need to sufficiently invest in: (1) incentives that attract and retain fully qualified educators, (2) improvements in instructional quality that include creating challenging and inclusive learning environments; and (3) wraparound services for young people, including early childhood education, health and mental health services, extended learning time, and social supports.
- **Mandate a rigorous authoring and renewal process for charters**
One way that states and districts can maintain accountability for charter schools is through their regulation of the organizations that authorize charter schools. States with the fewest authorizers have been found to have the strongest charter school outcomes. To do this, states should allow only districts to serve as authorizers, empower those districts to reject applications that do not meet standards, and establish policies for serious and consistent oversight.
- **Eliminate for-profit charter schools**
No federal, state, or local taxpayer dollars should be used to fund for-profit charter schools, nor should public funding be sent from nonprofit charters to for-profit charter management companies. The widespread findings of misconduct and poor student performance in for-profit charter schools demand the elimination of these schools. Moreover, allowing for-profit entities to operate schools creates an inherent conflict of interest.

REPORT OF THE NAACP TASK FORCE ON QUALITY EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Unfortunately, in urban areas throughout the nation, chronically failing Black schools are the norm, not the exception.ⁱⁱ

-- Larry Aubry, past president of the Inglewood, CA Board of Education
Statement made at the NAACP Task Force Hearing on Quality Education

This statement is sadly true. In 2017, over one in three Black fourth-graders and half of Black eighth-graders scored at the lowest performance level on the nationally-representative NAEP mathematics assessment.ⁱⁱⁱ The academic achievement gap between White and Black students has narrowed since the 1970s, but remains large.ⁱⁱⁱ And the achievement gap between children from high- and low-income families has grown in the last 50 years.^{iv}

To address this injustice, some states and communities have looked to charter schools to provide what they hope will be higher-quality educational opportunities for students. Federal and philanthropic supports for these publicly funded but nearly always privately-operated schools have greatly expanded in the last decade, especially in central city communities. The theory of chartering is that, in exchange for a more rigorous accountability expectation, charters are given more flexibility than neighborhood public schools to help students achieve and to seed innovation and feedback into the regular school system to stimulate improvements.

Over the past 10 years, the number of students in charter schools has almost tripled, with approximately 3.1 million students in charter schools in 2016-17.^v Approximately 56% of students in charter schools are from low-income families.^{vi} Charter schools are also more likely to enroll higher concentrations of Black students than neighborhood public schools. In 2014-15, 9% of district-run public schools had student populations where more than half of their students were Black, while 24% of charter schools had student populations where more than half of their students Black.^{vii}

With the expansion of charter schools – and their concentration in many low-income communities and communities of color -- concerns have been raised within the Black community about the quality, accessibility, and accountability of some charters, as well as their broader effects on the funding and management of school districts that must serve most students of color.

Overview of Task Force Hearings

Having called for a moratorium on charter expansion, the NAACP wanted to learn about whether charters are delivering on their promise to students and families. The NAACP Task Force on Quality Education engaged educational experts, NAACP members, parents, teachers, students, and communities across seven cities (New Haven, Memphis, Orlando, Los Angeles, Detroit, New Orleans, and New York) between December 3, 2016 and April 27, 2017.

The Task Force is grateful for the hundreds of engaged students, families, educators, and leaders who shared their joys and concerns about their community's current education system. For some, the Task Force hearing provided a forum for charter proponents to argue that charters provide the answer to under-resourced neighborhood schools in their community. Others testified that charter schools drain their community of resources and harm their children. In every hearing, many people agreed that the current education system fails too many Black children because of the lack of investment in the people, policies, and programs that support high quality educational opportunities. Consequently, participants at each hearing emphasized the need to protect students from bad schools and create more good schools.

All of the hearings featured testimony from both charter proponents and opponents. Because of the different community contexts, each hearing raised different issues: The first hearing, set in *New Haven*, Connecticut, raised issues regarding the low quality of education offered to students of color in central cities from both charter proponents and opponents. Empowering African American families was a theme throughout the hearing. One witness put it this way:

For me this mission is bigger than charters. Frankly it is bigger than choice. It is about something far more fundamental to the experience of being Black in America and that is the transference of power to our communities, returning to them the power to choose instead of being forced to accept whatever is handed to us no matter how insufficient or unsatisfactory that option might be.

Many hearings echoed concerns about inadequate funding for schools serving students of color. The *Memphis* hearing captured concerns about the closures of neighborhood schools in cities like Chicago, which hurts communities. The *Orlando* hearing raised concerns about untrained and uncertified teachers in schools serving students of color, often in charters, and the need for schools in high-need communities – whether charter or non-charter -- to attract and keep the strongest educators.

Held in the city where there are more charter schools than any other district in the country, the *Los Angeles* hearing raised the need for charters to be accountable and transparent, as well as intentional and well-planned, in order to support their own success and the sustainability of the entire public school system.

The *Detroit* hearing highlighted concerns with for-profit charter schools, as Michigan's charter sector is 79% for-profit. Also of concern is the lack of democratic control, as the school board in the Motor City was disbanded and replaced by the Education Achievement Authority. In *New Orleans*, a similar process of moving most schools under an authority removed from the school board resulted in it becoming the first and only city in the nation exclusively composed of charter schools. Students spoke passionately at the hearing about the lack of resources and lack of support in their schools. The lasting pain and frustration from the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina spilled into the hearing. Participants felt they had been ignored and unheard by policymakers, foundations and other outsiders involved with the education takeover in NOLA.

Finally, the *New York* hearing echoed concerns about charters run by for-profit corporations and charters that strategically enroll and disenroll students to maximize the money they receive from the district and state. Participants agreed that charters must have transparent regulations and be held to account for both access and for improving student achievement. For news clips of the hearings, as well as a copy of the standing resolution on charters, see the Appendix.

What follows is a brief primer on charter schools, followed by a summary of the key themes from the hearings. The report concludes with recommendations for how the U.S. education system generally, and charter schools specifically, can better meet the needs of all students, especially students of color and low-income students. These recommendations are informed by the themes heard across the hearings.

A Primer on Charter Schools

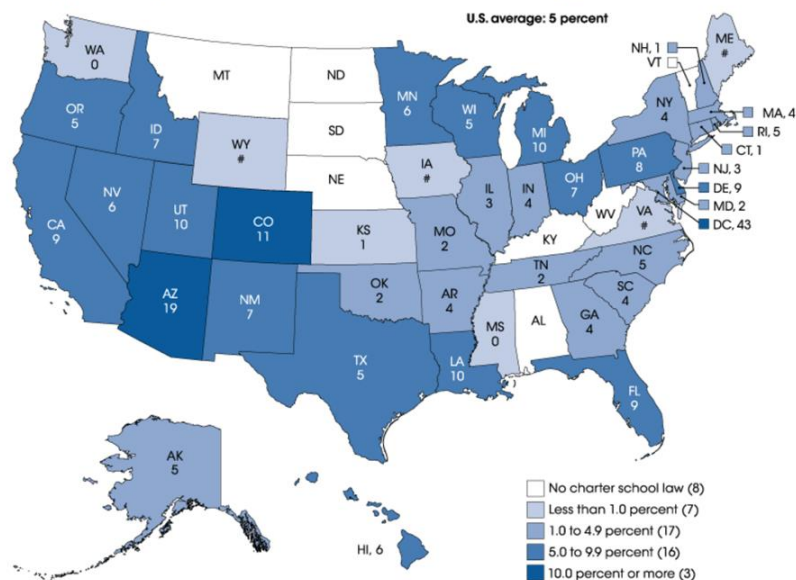
What are charter schools?

Charter schools are publicly funded schools that are nearly always privately operated by an appointed board under a written contract (or “charter”) with a state, district, or other organization, depending on the state. The charter typically outlines the details of the school, such as how the school will be managed, the kind of curriculum it will offer, and the kind of outcomes it will pursue. Charter schools generally have flexibility from many laws and regulations that govern neighborhood public schools, as long as the charter school meets the terms of its charter. There are many types of charter schools. Some charters are closely affiliated with school districts; most operate independently; while still others are part of a network of schools that may span many districts. Some are brick and mortar schools, while others are virtual or cyber charters. Some charters are brand new schools and some are conversions of existing schools. In addition, some charter school chains are run by education management organizations (EMOs) or charter management organizations (CMOs) that can be nonprofit or for-profit.

Who attends charter schools?

Approximately 50.4 million students attended U.S. public schools in the 2016-17 school year,^{viii} with 3.1 million students attending public charter schools.^{ix} Of the 7.8 million Black students in public schools, close to one million attend charter schools.^x Students attend charter schools in 43 states and the District of Columbia.^{xi} These states have laws governing charter schools, which differ in each state.

Percentage of all public school students enrolled in public charter schools



Rounds to zero.

NOTE: Categorizations are based on unrounded percentages.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 2014–15. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, [table 216.90](#).

How are charter schools funded?

Like traditional public schools, charters are funded with taxpayer dollars. States and districts fund charter schools differently. Charters also often receive private funding, beyond what they and neighborhood schools receive from public funds, through foundations, philanthropies, and families.

How are charter schools staffed?

Charter schools tend to be staffed by non-unionized teachers. In the 2009-10 school year, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools estimated that 12% of charter schools had collective bargaining agreements with teachers' unions. In 2012, the Center for Education Reform estimated that 7% of charter schools included unionized teachers.^{xii} Multiple studies have found that teachers and principals in charter schools turnover at higher rates than educators in district-run public schools,^{xiii} in part because charter schools tend to hire inexperienced educators who lack full teacher certification.^{xiv} The lack of experience and increased turnover in charter schools is significant because teacher turnover can undermine student achievement.^{xv} In addition, as teachers gain experience, they are more likely to positively influence student achievement and improve critical behaviors, including attendance.^{xvi}

How do students achieve in charter schools?

In terms of achievement, research finds mixed outcomes for charters as a group—with some doing better and others were doing worse than district-run public schools. For example, a large-scale study of student data from 16 states, from the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University's Hoover Institute, found that 17% of charter schools produced academic gains that were better than traditional public schools, while 37% performed worse than their traditional public school counterparts serving similar students.^{xvii} Forty-six percent showed no difference.^{xviii}

However, outcomes vary across states, which have very different laws.^{xix} For example, in Ohio and Arizona, where an unregulated market strategy has created a huge range of for-profit and nonprofit providers with few public safeguards, most charter schools have low ratings and charter school students achieve at consistently lower levels than their demographically similar public school counterparts.^{xx}

Another recent study conducted by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) examined differences in performance between students attending charter schools and students attending the small subset of traditional public schools that send students to charters (usually less than 20% of public schools) across 27 states and New York City.^{xxi} Averaged across these sites, the study found a small positive effect of being in a charter school vs. being in a "feeder" public school on reading scores, and no impact on math scores. It also found that charter school enrollment explained less than one hundredth of 1% of the variation in students' test performance. During the Los Angeles hearing, Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig, a Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at California State University, Sacramento, testified on the size of these findings in relation to other potential education reforms:

I wanted to know how African Americans do under the CREDO study: 0.05 [standard deviations] is the impact of charters in the 2015 CREDO study. Which means that you need a telescope to see it. Class size reduction [has] 400% more impact. Pre-k? 1000% more impact than charters.

It is a concern that charter schools have had a larger influence on the national conversation about how to improve education in communities of color than these other well-researched educational investments that have been shown to have much larger effects on achievement.

FINDINGS

The findings that emerged across the seven hearing sites are presented below. They are organized around the following four major themes:

Lack of educational investment and quality education in central cities
Perceived benefits of charter schools
Perceived problems with charter schools
Accountability concerns

Lack of educational investment in central cities

Why are all schools failing African American students?

–Dr. James Comer, Yale University

At each of the hearings there was unity on one issue: Too many students of color living in central cities are being deprived of the educational opportunities they deserve and need if they are to succeed in a world where education is the key that unlocks the door to the future. The criticisms of existing inequities were passionate. For many families in the central city, quality education is unavailable. Lester Young, a member of the New York State Board of Regents, testified:

We have communities in New York City right now where the parents say, “There’s not one middle school I can place my child in.” Now, that’s an issue and what we ought to be asking ourselves is, what is the plan?

Alycia Meriweather, Interim General Superintendent of Detroit Public Schools Community District, noted that resources are at the core of the problem:

So we can take public education and do creative things within that context. But I want to be clear that none of that is cheap. And what we have to talk about in this whole conversation is that change costs money, and we need to put it on the table that either we’re going to invest now or we’re going to pay later. And I continue to claim the best investment is now. The best investment is now, and there’s no greater investment than to invest in a human being. It’s never a waste. So in public education we look at funding. This issue of equitable funding, I would argue it’s not an achievement gap; there’s an opportunity gap and what do we need to do to fill those opportunity gaps and make sure that students get the opportunities that they need.

A number of the witnesses looked beyond the current debate about charter schools and asked the Task Force to look at these bigger issues. Robert Runcie, Superintendent of Broward County Schools in Florida, said:

When you have communities that are being pitted on traditional versus charter school, the big issues are ... really around funding, getting the right kind of resources, professionalizing teaching, and investing in our education to pipeline development. It’s almost a distraction in my mind. We need to move away from that and get to these larger issues that are impacting our kids and communities.

In Memphis David Pickler, Co-Founder and President of the American Public Education Foundation, was blunt about the politics of education:

And I will tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that I believe our public schools are under attack. And they have been for many years.

At the New Haven hearing, Jeremiah Grace, the Director of Northeast Charter Schools Network, framed the debate in terms of power:

For me this mission is bigger than charters. Frankly it is bigger than choice. It is about something far more fundamental to the experience of being Black in America and that is the transference of power to our communities, returning to them the power to choose instead of being forced to accept whatever is handed to us no matter how insufficient or unsatisfactory that option might be. This is not an either/or debate. In fact this is a with/and situation in which Black families should have the right to choose the school environment that will best serve the needs of the child, be it a district school, charter, magnet, private school or otherwise.

Many voiced a deep sense of moral outrage about a school system that divides students by race and socio-economic status. In Orlando, Albert Fields of the Hillsborough County NAACP called out a system where institutionalized racism segregates students:

We have alternative schools in Hillsborough County and they seem to be full of Black and Brown people. And they call that the warehouse on the way to prison. So as you are doing your report, I want to say please look at that as part of your process.

Yet, many noted that charters are not a tidy answer. In New Orleans, a city of all charter schools, Bill Quigley, Professor at Loyola Law School and Civil Rights Lawyer, summed up the challenge facing those in search of successful reform:

Successful reform is needed, successful reform is wanted, we all want it but that system has not been created in New Orleans, and if you're going to look at schools, we cannot look just at these schools at the top and keep everybody else out and cater to a very special few. But we should look at the system as the NAACP has always done, from the point of the most vulnerable, from the point of the most disadvantaged, from the point of the people with the most need, and from that perspective, unfortunately the charter school system in New Orleans does not receive a passing grade.

Perhaps the most powerful statement was made by Brenda Niminocks, a substitute teacher in the city school system of Detroit:

I currently teach at this school biology. The majority of my students are 9th graders. They have been without a highly qualified teacher for over two months. I am a substitute teacher in a vacancy because they could not keep a regular teacher in that position. When I came, I asked for textbooks. Only have 12 textbooks. Over half of the biology textbooks are tore up. So I'm using my own resources out of my own pocket, like many of the dedicated educators for this district, we do on a daily basis.

It's sad when you walk in a classroom here and you don't even know it's a biology classroom. We don't have the materials, we don't have the resources. I teach the young people to aim higher than just a career as a basketball player. I want to see more investment in our young people. Our young people have to walk in the middle of the street because they're walking past abandoned buildings and houses that are open. We need help, and I'm pleading and I'm appealing to everybody that's listening that can help us, please help us. This is our future.

While concerns about lack of investment in many central city schools were prominent, there was also testimony about the undying commitment of many parents to neighborhood public schools and a deep sense of loss when such schools have been closed. One Chicago parent described the hunger strike that was undertaken to save a neighborhood school from closure:

We went on a 34-day hunger strike. We did not eat, and we went to every public venue that any of the school board members or any of the politicians were at to let them know how we felt. And after 34 days, it became a historic moment that the only school that had ever been closed in the area was reopened as an open-enrollment school, a neighborhood school.... The school is open now, and the parents are involved, and that's a great thing going on. It became a win from what would have been a loss. So when the parents are listened to, good things can happen as relates to public education.

Walter Umrani, Director of New Orleans Peace Keepers, also highlighted the need for neighborhood schools to enable parent engagement:

The neighborhood school is essential in dealing with urban students. We spend 33 million on bussing when I think it used to be 17 million, years ago. You take that twenty something million and you invest it in the neighborhood schools, most of our parents are single mothers, they can't go on the other side of town for a report card conference and then we got people coming up here bashing them for not coming in, that's not right.

And Bob Wilson of Journey for Justice in Chicago noted that the goal of investments should be to offer high-quality neighborhood public schools to all students:

Every child should have a world-class education. We should be able to walk out of our house and go to a world-class school within walking distance. We all want the same thing. Our schools have never been adequately funded. Never. I'm going to say it again: They have never been adequately funded. That's why you have the low-performing neighborhood schools in our cities.

Perceived Benefits of Charter Schools

As part of the hearings, charter school operators, advocates, students, and parents were invited to testify. The proponents were generally positive about charter schools. The theme that charter schools are performing an important mission was common across all the hearing sites. According to a number of charter school advocates, students who graduate from their schools are very likely to attend college. Donyale McGhee, Principal of the Somerset Academy Prep North Florida in Broward County, made this statement:

I'm proud this afternoon to state that I do work for a charter school that graduated 96.5% of my students last year. Not only did we graduate them, 86% of our African American and minority and Hispanic students went on to go to universities throughout the State of Florida and one of our students actually went to Stanford University.

As McGhee's comment implies, some studies have found that students who attend charter high schools are more likely to attend college.^{xxii} Other research suggests that charter schools may attract more motivated students who are more likely to attend college, regardless of the type of high school they attend.^{xxiii} Still other research finds that high graduation and college-going rates are sometimes a function of proactively transferring out a large number of students who struggle with attendance, behavior, or learning before calculating these statistics.^{xxiv}

At the same time, there are charter schools that work to take and keep all students, as other public schools do. Katie Duffy, CEO of Democracy Prep Public School stated:

In a few weeks, our first college graduate is going to be walking across that stage at the top colleges and universities in the country, including Boston College, the Naval Academy, and Howard University. And there are hundreds following behind in those same colleges and universities...Democracy Prep is open to all students, regardless of race, religion, income, immigration status, be they special needs learners, or English language learners. Our school average in free and reduced price lunch is above [the average] for

our district in New York and hovers around the same in special education percent in New York: 18%. About 5% of our scholars are in transitory housing. Democracy Prep has proudly never expelled a student. We are proud that regardless of the backgrounds from which our students may come, we believe in the potential of every student. –

Some charter school operators pointed to their successes in the face of the steep social and economic challenges many of their students face. Kate Mehok, Cofounder of Crescent City Schools in New Orleans, put it this way:

Its challenging to do the work in our schools, where poverty brings a lot of challenges to our families. But our families really want to be in our schools. And every single time we do surveys in the state, or in this city, or on our own, the results come back 80, 90, 100% of families are satisfied with our school. And I trust my parents, I trust my parents to make decisions about their students. We are over-enrolled in all three of our schools. If we weren't serving our families, I feel like they would move somewhere else. That's one way I know we're doing what we need to do in addition to the academic success.

Quality was an argument that ran through nearly all the pro-charter testimony. Jamar McKneely of Inspire Schools in New Orleans was emphatic:

I urge you, yes, this is a conversation we need to have, but we need to focus on the quality because we are losing too much in the streets not only in New Orleans but in our nation. And what I'm seeing in our schools, regardless of how you want to define it because we are a public school, I'm seeing Black and Brown kids learn.... Our high school is the number one academic school when it comes to kids of poverty. I see our kids are competing and getting into the top colleges in our nation. I'm seeing Black kids defy odds like never before. I'm seeing at our K-8 school that kids are actually doing some of the best work. Were these students are actually going to high school ready to compete?

Claims that charter schools “cream” the better students, were rejected by some charter school operators. At the Memphis hearing Maya Bugg, CEO of the Tennessee Charter School Center, stated:

People talk a lot about charter schools kicking kids out. The retention rates are about the same as they are in traditional schools. So what that means is that our students are staying in charter schools at about the same rate, as they are traditional schools. We have about a 97% attendance rate for high schools in our public charter schools, and we have an 89% graduation rate, which is very high.

Nearly all charter school advocates described themselves as be strong supporters of public education. Natasha Sherry-Perez, a public charter school parent in New York, made a passionate plea for unity:

Our children immediately deserve the best education we can provide in Brooklyn. And the kinds of schools that are providing that for my child, they are nonprofit, highly publicly accountable charter schools that sent 100% of the high school graduating scholars to college. We operate on the public dollar, which is all about students who are fully enrolled and they're closing the achievement gap. We're also cheering for our district schools. We're working with them and we have forged a partnership with the New York City Department of Education so that we can share those practices with our district schools. We practice what we preach and teach and we want the best for all children, no matter what school they go to. USA Today illustrates our stance on high quality education and I just ask that you take all that you've learned and really look at, region by region, what's best for everyone. Please don't divide us, unite us.

As would be expected, charter school advocates and operators believe that their schools offer a strong education, and many argue that it is a better education than many neighborhood public schools.

Some community members, students, and family members also spoke during the public comment portions of the hearings. The comments were evenly split between support for and comments voicing concerns about charter schools. Some spoke about how they love their charter school because it provides “the best education.” Other parents and teachers described students being inappropriately classified as having special needs and/or consistently suspended and removed from their charter school, as described in the next section.

Perceived Problems with Charter Schools

A number of perceived problems with charter schools also surfaced in the hearings. These include:

- Issues of access and retention
- Concerns about quality
- Issues of accountability and transparency
- Transportation challenges
- Concerns about for-profit charters

Issues of access and retention

The claim that charter schools provide greater options for families was often countered by accounts of exclusionary enrollment and pushout practices that are viewed as common to many charter schools. Many participants testified about students with special needs, those perceived as poor test takers, or those who pose as a behavioral challenge are either not accepted, or once enrolled, disciplined or counseled out of many charter schools.

In New Orleans, the Southern Poverty Law Center had to bring a lawsuit against the Recovery School District because so many special education students were rejected from all the charter schools they applied to. Hilary Shelton, Director of the NAACP Washington Bureau noted that:

It is our unfortunate experience that in some cases charter schools are being used to perpetuate discrimination. While public schools are required to take every student, it is the option of charter schools to admit Johnny, but not Jamal or Jose.

Witnesses explained that while a charter school may claim to be open to all students, between reserving seats prior to any lottery process, selective enrollment, the use of exclusionary discipline processes, and counseling out of students, it may actually be exclusive. According to testimony by civil rights lawyer Dr. Bill Quigley, Professor at Loyola Law School:

What we have is a very small group of selective schools that are not approachable by most of the people in New Orleans. They are charter schools that are reserved for the wealthy. They are reserved overwhelmingly for White children of the city of New Orleans. They have their own special, non-transparent process. They do not participate in the application process that the rest of the city of New Orleans talks about and uses. For example, one of the high scoring schools is 53% White, 21% economically disadvantaged and 4% Special Ed, compared to the overall system which has 7% White, so it is 7 times as White as the system as a whole. It is only one-fourth as economically integrated as the system as a whole and has less than half the special education students the system as a whole has.

Most studies have found that charters are more racially and economically segregated than public schools generally, including underserving English learners and special-education students relative to the public schools in their districts.^{xxv}In some states, like Louisiana, charters are allowed to set admissions policies similar to private schools. In others, like California, this practice is illegal. However, a recent ACLU study found that one

in five California charters violate state law by publicly posting policies that would restrict access for high-need students.^{xxvi}

Student pushout was a widely described problem. Bob Wilson, a member of Journey for Justice from Chicago, Illinois, testified about a local study found that Chicago charter school expulsion rates were more than 1,000% higher than those of Chicago Public Schools on a per-pupil basis.^{xxvii} Wilson noted that one charter school in Chicago claims a 100% graduation rate, “yet only 40% of their incoming freshmen graduate. So between freshman year and senior year, 60% are pushed out due to suspensions, expulsions...[and] counseling-out students.”^{xxviii}

Other studies mentioned by witnesses described similar patterns. For example, a review of three years of expulsion data found that Washington, D.C. charter schools expelled 676 students, while the neighborhood public schools expelled only 24.^{xxix} During the Los Angeles hearing, a panelist mentioned a recent study that found “charter schools suspended higher percentages of Black students and students with disabilities than traditional public schools.” The study the panelist referenced, conducted by the UCLA Civil Rights Project in 2016, found that Black males are over three times more likely to be suspended or expelled from charter schools than their White peers and that nearly 50% of black secondary students attending a charter school were enrolled in schools where the suspension rate for Black students was about 25% annually.^{xxx}

Parents described in detail what this practice is in action. Clarence Spowler, a former charter school parent in New York City, shared the following:

My son, with great fanfare, got accepted into Harlem Success Academy. Within his first day of school, I was told that he was unfocused and he needed to be disciplined. I was like, “Okay. They have high standards. This is good.” I didn’t see anything wrong with it...within days, people were coming into the classroom. They didn’t identify themselves. They were sitting in the back and they had papers and pads and they immediately, systematically, with these systems in place, identified children that they knew were going to be problematic and my son was among them, along with four other kids. Within three days, they had placed him in the back of the class in a table together and one by one, as every day went by, one of those kids were missing and they were gone. I was the hold out and I only lasted twelve days... I could not understand how a school that claimed to be public could come to me and say, “Listen. Something is wrong with your son. You got to go.”

Spowler’s experience is reflected in research that found some New York City charter schools have routinely adopted suspension and expulsion policies that the authors claim violates students’ civil rights.^{xxxi}

Exclusionary practices in charter schools are not limited to those viewed as having “behavioral” challenges; they can extend to students who struggle academically. Alesia Joseph, a New York City public school special educator describes how in her school “we receive children from charter schools two weeks before an exam. Children that they know won’t make it on the test so they send them back to the public school. After October 31st, we received an abundance of kids because the money didn’t follow those kids.”

A similar point was made by Ruby Newbold, Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers:

At charter schools, not every child who applies gets accepted or can stay. And the only choice parents have is choosing what application to fill out. The application process also requires parental involvement, and there are far too many obstacles for some parents to be involved in the day-to-day lives of our children. And truth be told, most high-performing charters only accept the students likely to succeed. Oftentimes, we see evidence of charter schools counseling students out or utilizing harsh discipline policies to suspend and later expel some of our most vulnerable students. And these students end up back in traditional public schools; yet the money stays at the charter school.

During the Los Angeles hearing, a student described the psychological toll youth experience when they are pushed out of charter schools:

My friend was kicked out of the charter school and she came back to Coliseum and she had to readjust to everything going on. And it was very humiliating for her to explain to other people that she got out because, “Oh, I wasn’t enough for a charter school, I wasn’t good enough or I didn’t perform enough for a charter school.” This is where the emotional aspect of leaving a charter school comes in regarding the expulsion of kids from charter schools for grades, which I feel is unfair and strenuous for the parents and students.

Concerns about Quality

Concerns about charter school quality also surfaced. For example, in Mississippi, Dr. Earl Watkins, Chair of Mississippi State NAACP Education Committee, testified that under Mississippi Code 372847:

No more than 25% of teachers in a charter school in Mississippi may be exempt from state teacher licensure requirements. Administrators in charter schools in Mississippi do not have to be certified, and they can hold only a bachelor’s degree to be a principal in that school... [Compare this to] traditional public schools where the threshold is 5% of the staff can teach out of field or not be certified, and principals in public schools in Mississippi must be certified as administrators, which means they must at least hold a master’s degree for AA certification in that particular area. So we are not playing by the same rules in order to ensure that we are doing what is right by children.

One of the central tenants of charter schools is that they are closed if they do not deliver on the educational commitments outlined in their charters (e.g., if the school has low academic performance, financial issues, etc.). In 2016-17, approximately 211 charter schools closed across the United States.^{xxxii} Since 2001, at least 2500 charter schools have closed, affecting nearly 300,000 American children enrolled in primary and secondary schools.^{xxxiii} School closures disproportionately affect Black students. In 2013, one analysis in Chicago found that black students composed 40% of the student enrollment in the district, but accounted for 88% of the students affected by closures. Similarly, in Philadelphia, Black students composed 58% of the district’s enrollment, but made up 81% of the students affected by the closures.^{xxxiv} During the Memphis hearing, Merwyn L. Scott, a Director at the National Education Association, described how school closures especially hurt Black students:

Black students are particularly susceptible to being impacted by school closures. From the year 2000 to 2012, Black students were 29% of all students enrolled in U.S. charter schools, yet 45% of all students in charter schools that closed during those years were Black.

While school closures are sometimes seen as evidence that charter schools are in fact more accountable than public schools, charter school closures can seriously disrupt students’ learning, especially when closures occur during the school year. Scott further described the effects of school closures on students and families:

Charter schools are far less stable schooling options for communities than traditional or magnet schools. Forty percent of all charter schools opened in 2000 no longer were operating in 2013.^{xxxv} School closures are touted by charters as evidence of high accountability, but beyond the disruption they create for students, families, and communities, a study of three cities found that students in closed charter schools do not typically move on to higher performing schools.^{xxxvi}

Robert Runci, the Superintendent of Broward County Schools, described a similar situation during the Orlando hearing:

I can tell you since I've been at the district we've closed approximately 30 charters due to a variety of issues; academic, financial and other issues that have arisen. We believe that the market has reached its saturation point. Over the last three years we've seen the number of charter applications go from 32 to 19 to 5.

Broward County School District enrolls over 271,000 students and has over 300 schools. Closing 30 schools, 10% of the schools, represents a significant disruption to students' education and districts' operations. Alycia Merriweather, the Interim General Superintendent of Detroit Public Schools Community District, described firsthand how charter school closings can strain districts:

I can tell you that even just this fall; [Detroit Public Schools Community District] had to assist with a school that basically notified parents on a Tuesday that they will be closing on a Friday. We stepped in to help because we care about children. And it's unbelievable that someone would choose to do that. But there's no regulation around that.

Issues of accountability and transparency

In many hearings, concerns were raised about financial transparency and appropriateness in charter schools. Gary Heisman, Human Resources Director at the Hamden Public Schools raised the issue of financial transparency:

No organization should get public money if they can't show how every penny is spent. Charter school leaders have fought tooth and nail against such public accountability and have gone to court and have litigated it in order to protect their right not to disclose certain information, particularly fiscal information. –

Similar concerns were raised in New Orleans by Kina Collins, a teacher at El Camino Real Charter School High School:

As an educator at a public high school, I witnessed first-hand some of the serious issues with transparency and accountability. The former leadership at my former school site abused the lack of oversight by the charter school division, and proceeded to spend thousands on delicious wine, scrumptious steaks, and luxurious hotel rooms. Meanwhile I still have close to 40 students in a class. This was money meant for our students. Unfortunately for students, teachers, and parents, it was a relentless fight to expose the gross injustices happening at our community school.

Robert Cotto Jr. from the Hartford Board of Education endorsed the NAACP Board Resolution calling for a moratorium on new charters. Cotto said, "a moratorium on new charters is necessary. In Connecticut, privately managed, publicly funded charter schools continue to have problems with accountability and transparency, diversion of funds away from public schools, outrageously high rates of suspension, expulsion, and racial segregation."

The extent to which charter schools are financially accountable and transparent often varies depending upon the strength of individual state charter laws. For example, according to testimony on Tennessee State charter laws, "The schools are required to have audits, they're required to report on academic achievement, financial management, and organizational facilities every year and report this information to districts and to the state."^{xxxvii} Compare this to Michigan, where according to the Detroit Free Press,

Michigan taxpayers pour nearly \$1 billion a year into charter schools. But state laws regulating charters are among the nation's weakest, and the state demands little accountability in how taxpayer dollars are spent and how well children are educated.

Gary Heisman, Human Resources Director at Hamden Public Schools in Connecticut, stated during his testimony that:

Public schools have a legal obligation to show how they use public money and the majority of charters lack such financial transparency. In many cases we don't know how charter schools are spending money both coming from the state of Connecticut and other money that does not come from the state of Connecticut. A recent study of the KIPP charter school chain found that KIPP receives an estimated \$6500 more per pupil in revenues from public or private sources compared to local districts.

Different licensing requirements for charter schools, particularly weakened requirements, allow charters to pay lower wages for less qualified educators. The type of budgetary decisions can be masked in states where there is less financial transparency required, especially when combined with other weakened standards and requirements for charter schools compared to traditional public schools.

There are also significant variations in charter school staff salaries, raising a question as to whether that is a responsible use of taxpayer dollars. For example, according to testimony provided, "Success Academy Charter Schools has 41 schools at 14,000 students and its operator Eva Moskowitz earns half a million dollars a year for 14,000 students. And by comparison, New York City schools at 1.1 million students, a \$25 billion budget and that Chancellor makes \$212,614 a year."^{xxxviii} In New Orleans, the principal of a highly selective charter school makes more than a quarter of a million dollars every year, compared to the superintendent of schools in Baton Rouge, the biggest community in the state, who makes a hundred and forty thousand dollars a year.^{xxxix}

Furthermore, the idea that there is money to be made within the charter school community is perhaps best demonstrated by the amount of money spent trying to preserve weak charter laws, particularly as they relate to financial oversight, transparency and accountability. According to testimony by Jessica Tang from the Boston Teachers Union and Matthew Cregor from the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice, in Massachusetts, charter advocates spent \$25 million, which was the largest ballot expenditure in the history of Massachusetts. Most noteworthy is where that money came from. According to Tang's testimony: "80% [was] from out of state, Wall Street, hedge fund managers, and people who don't disclose, and Walton. Where have they been when fighting mass incarceration, gentrification, and funding? How can this not be about privatization?"

Transportation challenges and school closures

One of the side-effects of extensive chartering is that children do not have a right to attend school in their neighborhood. In many communities, all of the neighborhood public schools have closed. Children may be rejected for admission from nearby charter schools or be unable to attend because nearby charters are full – or there may be no nearby schools at all. As a result, many children have to travel long distances to attend school.

In some communities, like Detroit and Memphis, enrollments in neighborhood public schools are decreasing due to smaller populations in these cities and to charter schools enrolling more students. This combination has contributed to public schools closing in many neighborhoods. James Hare, a researcher at Two Sigma Research Group, described this situation in Detroit:

We have actual education deserts in Detroit, where in certain parts of our town there are no schools because of this dual policy of managing the public school to make it extinct and then promoting charters. Well, the charters want to operate in certain better neighborhoods in the city and that's what happens.

Dr. Joe Bouie, a Louisiana State Representative, described a similar situation in New Orleans. Specifically, he shared how the lack of neighborhood public schools in each community has influenced the city:

We have no more neighborhood schools in our community. And you see, in the Black community, school is more than brick and mortar, as you well know. It is a support system. Parents now can't walk to the school to talk to the teacher. We have buses pick kids up, pass three neighborhood schools to get across town.

As Reverend Joseph McCaster, Assistant Principal at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Charter school in New Orleans, noted:

Our children are hurting. They are suffering... Come take a ride with me at 6 o'clock in the morning when I am on my way to the North County. Come see the first group of children I see huddled under the tree in lightning, in storm, with no shelter waiting for a bus that may or may not come. –

When the school students attend is not determined by the location of their home, many children and families must travel significant distances for their education. Rather than spending the early morning or after-school hours with their family or engaged in extra-curricular activities or resting, these students instead spend this precious time traveling to and from their schools. As Dr. Joe Bouie, a Louisiana State Representative, described, "What we know is that our kids, because of some transportation scam, are getting up at 4:30 in the morning, boarding buses at 5, and get home at 6 at night." The experience of students in New Orleans is reflected in research finding increased commute times for students attending charter schools.^{xi}

As Detroit has closed schools, State Representative Sherry Gay-Dagnogo shared how the cities' limited transportation system has affected students:

We've created school deserts, we don't have an operable transportation system that is throughout our city. And so you have children that are displaced.

The increased transportation costs can add-up for districts. Walter Umrani, Director of New Orleans Peace Keepers, described:

The neighborhood school is essential in dealing with urban students. We spend \$33 million on bussing when I think it used to be \$17 million, years ago. You take that twenty something million and you invest it in the neighborhood schools. Most of our parents are single mothers. They can't go on the other side of town for a report card conference. And then we got people coming up here bashing them for not coming in. That's not right.

As Umrani described, school choice can increase transportation costs, including environmental emissions costs, because of the increased number of students who travel outside of their neighborhood for school.^{xii}

Issues with For-Profit Charters

Approximately 13% of U.S. charter schools are run by for-profit companies^{xiii} and approximately 15 states allow virtual schools, many of which are operated by for-profit organizations.^{xliii} In some cases, the nonprofit charter is run by a for-profit management company, to whom the nonprofit pays substantial fees. State charter laws vary in terms of whether for-profit and virtual charters are permissible. Dr. Pamela Pugh, Educational Chair for the Michigan State conference of the NAACP and member of the State Board of Education, noted during the Detroit, Michigan testimony, "for-profit charters are not allowed in Tennessee and other states, and are closely monitored in many states. In Michigan, for-profit charters are expanding with little oversight." This raises several concerns, as outlined in the testimony provided by Becky Pringle, Vice President of the National Education Association:

We're concerned that many of our charter schools are run by for-profit corporations. The two main

incidents, even they're considered nonprofit charter schools, they're run by EMO's that are managed by folks that aren't even in the community, or in the state even. They come to areas in Pennsylvania, like New York City, and they already have a long record of mismanagement, from financial mismanagement to not dealing with issues of equity and access.

Supporters of for-profit charter schools assert that they can reduce inefficiencies in the public school system. And supporters of virtual charter schools (who provide most classes through the internet) claim that they are a flexible education option for students who might have other commitments, such as actors or athletes. Despite these alleged benefits, a number of studies have found that students in for-profit charters and virtual charters achieve at lower rates than their peers.^{xliv}

Testimony across sites, from both charter proponents and opponents, consistently raised concerns with for-profit charters, including those run by for-profit education management organizations (EMOs). For-profit virtual charter schools came in for special concerns.

Katie Duffy, CEO of Democracy Prep Public School, voiced a common view:

For-profit operators have no business in education. I don't understand it. There's no good reason for our states to allow this to happen to our kids. They are not assets and liabilities and they shouldn't be treated as such. -

This concern was also captured by Rafiq Kalam Id-Din, Managing Partner of Teaching Firms of American Charter Schools and Co-Founder and Managing Partner of Ember Charter Schools for Mindful Education Innovation and Transformation, who testified that:

For-profit, under definition, undermines the idea that at the core, that it is a service-driven, knowledge-worker driven endeavor. And as a for-profit with shareholders that ultimately, it's their values. What's important to them would override what you're providing to your client, so to speak.

In Florida, Jodi Diegel, an attorney at Southern Legal Counsel, described how "We have seen the fraud in the for-profit schools in Florida and that is a big concern." Similar concerns were raised in Los Angeles. For example, Jose Alcala, a teacher and member of the California Teachers Association, described:

What we are starting to get is the for-profits that are taking funds.... We are losing our students to them because they promise our young people that they will graduate them quicker, because they promise technology and all of these resources. And these young people leave us, take the ADA with them. And then actually come back further behind in their graduation requirements.

In the Orlando and New Haven hearing, participants raised concerns about virtual charter schools, many of which are for-profit and can achieve greater profits, because they do not make investments in brick-and-mortar schools and often have few teachers available to help students on-line. Robert Runci, Superintendent of Broward County Schools, described the problem during the Orlando hearing:

One of the trends that we've also seen is that virtual charter schools are having a lot of issues. We see it not just in Broward, but I think across the country. I think that model is really coming into question.

Accountability Concerns

You have to be accountable to the people in this city, the community, and people like me...trying to bring this city back.

– Walter Umrani, Director of New Orleans Peace Keepers

Like Umrani, students, parents, school leaders, and community emphasized the need for accountability throughout the public school system, especially in charter schools. In every hearing, participants made statements about three aspects of accountability: (1) a lack of accountability throughout the education system; (2) the benefits of charter school accountability; and (3) the failings of charter school accountability.

Many hearing participants argued that the traditional public school system has consistently failed many children with no consequences. In each hearing, charter school supporters shared a similar explanation for how charter schools are more accountable than traditional public schools. For example, in the New Haven hearing, Dr. Steve Perry, a former charter school operator, noted:

Rare is it the occasion that you will find a traditional public school or neighborhood school that actually gets shut down. But a charter school that does not meet its expectations can and will be shut down. So when the conversation is one around transparency and accountability then the only ones that we should be having a conversation towards are the traditional neighborhood schools that don't seem to ever get shut down no matter how many of our children that they fail generation after generation.

As these comments illustrate, the primary rationale for charter schools is that they can be better held to account. As Katie Duffy, CEO of a charter school in New York City, explained, “There was a fundamental bargain and we said, ‘In exchange for more autonomy, we would have higher levels of accountability and transparency.’” As Duffy described, charter schools are given flexibility in exchange for increased accountability through their authorizing bodies and by students’ families who, at least in theory, can leave schools if they fail to educate their children. However, as noted in much of the testimony, where charters have had less accountability, a variety of documented abuses have occurred.

Transparency and Voice

Comments raised in each of the hearings provided a counter-narrative to the alleged benefits of charter school accountability regimes. For example, families of students in charter schools do not always know how to hold their schools to account. Teresa Jones, former chair of the Shelby County School Board, explained during the Memphis hearing:

Parents do not feel they have a public place to go, and they come to the elected officials, such that I represent because they're living in the boundaries of my district. So I've had the conversation with charter operators, and they assure me there are public meetings, but when I ask the question how many parents attend, I'm told maybe one. I get complaints from citizens who feel that they're not part of that process and that their input or wishes or—in terms of how the school is run, is not being considered.

In addition to families holding charter schools accountable, the extent to which charter schools are held accountable by their governing organizations varies. As Katie Duffy described, “This does though, depend, state by state, on how authorizers really monitor charter schools... We file reports and audit is routine, we embrace the accountability we have coming from our families who have entrusted us with the education of their students.”

Suggestions arose throughout the hearings for how to better ensure that schools are held accountable for providing students a quality education. One suggestion was to provide clearer information about educational options to families. During the Memphis hearing, Mr. Cardell Orrin, the Director of Stand for Children, described how:

We need to be sure... that we have the transparency about how schools are doing so that people can make the right choices for their kids; the transparency of how schools are doing and of the opportunities that kids get at those schools.

Access and Standards

In addition, the accountability laws and regulations vary by state. Becky Pringle, Vice President of the National Education Association, described during the New York hearing:

The [charter school] laws are different from state to state. Not all of them...require that accountability. But most especially, they don't require the kind of safe guards that we want all of our children to have when they go to those schools. We want to make sure that those schools are going to accept students that have those special needs. We want to make sure that we do not create separate systems that are unequal.

For example, Dr. Maya Bugg, CEO of a charter school network in Memphis, posited that Tennessee charter schools have the same expectations as traditional public schools, at least as it pertains to state testing. She said that charter schools in the state:

...are funded by public dollars, but they are accountable for the same academic standards. They take the same state tests and assessments. They are required to report this information to state and districts. They are held accountable to those same standards.

A Board Member of New Haven Public Schools, Dr. Edward Joyner, noted that accountability standards should go far beyond giving the same tests:

There should be quality indicators.... I subscribe entirely to the NAACP's position on charter schools. One, the National School Boards Association says that charters should be governed by the same quality indicators as public schools, environment, labor practices, due process, fiscal accountability, civil rights, and standards and assessment. In public schools we can't send kids out in the middle of the year. We can't refuse to take kids that come in in the middle of the year. We have to take everybody.

In New Orleans, participants emphasized the lack of accountability in the all-charter education system, ranging from how students are assigned to charter schools to the consequences for charter schools where students chronically underperform. Dr. Adrienne Dixon, Associate Professor at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, explained:

The school assignment process, from my research—having talked with a number of parents and people who work in the district— is a mystery.... Though [parents] apply to schools and rank eight schools, they are not guaranteed their number one school... Once their child is assigned to a school, if at any point during the year a parent is dissatisfied with the school they are unable to exercise that choice and move their child to another school. They will have to wait until the next school year, and again they will not get their choice. They will be assigned a school... The word "choice" is kind of like "alternative facts."

The comments throughout the hearings highlight the need for improved transparency, accountability, and support for all schools, especially struggling neighborhood and charter schools.

Authorizing and Funding

The 43 states and the District of Columbia each have different approaches for overseeing charter schools, varying in who they allow to serve as authorizers of charter schools, how they fund charter schools, and how they govern charter schools.

One of the major ways in which states influence charter school policy is by who they allow to serve as an "authorizer" of a charter school. The authorizer is the entity that is responsible for approving and holding

charter schools accountable for delivering a quality education to students. Katie Duffy, CEO of a charter school in New York City, explained:

I mentioned New York. I think they are some of the best authorizer climates in the country. But, I think that we need, as a community of educators, to demand that authorizers for charter schools have a higher bar than what we see across the country. It's not acceptable...Charter schools are not one thing. There are great charter school and then, there are not great charter schools and we need authorizers that know the difference.

States also play an important role in how they fund charter schools. As Teresa Jones, former Chair of the Shelby County School Board, described during the Memphis hearing:

So the elephant in the room and the crux of this whole process of choice is that the funding model is still antiquated, not adequate, and it actually pits charters against the traditional public school system.

One reason for this is due to the challenges public school districts and their neighborhood schools face in planning for their budgets given the uncertainty of charter school enrollments. Jones explained:

What happens with the funding? So yes, the money follows the child. And, initially, the charter gets the funding, and if that child is expelled and is coming back to our district, we get that funding back. Eventually. And that is a problem because we're having a problem structuring a budget on eventual funds from an unknown number of children that may come back to our district. Actually, they are here today, but the funding will flow in several months later.

This year we're able to, as a district, look at our budgeting in a whole different light because this is the first year in a long time that the charters decided, voluntarily, that they would not take over any schools. So we now can plan, at least for the next year. And that's what I've advocated for. Not that you don't need charters, not that you don't need choice, but that it be done in a more systematic, thoughtful way to provide for the financial stability of all the districts.

The Need for a System

Multiple parents and community members described the need for the state or district to govern all schools—traditional and charter—so that there's one system of democratically-accountable, high-quality schools. This system would help students and families make sense of the variety of education options and ensure that all schools support student learning. In Detroit, Tonya Allen, the President of the Skillman Foundation, shared the consequences of the city's fragmented education system:

Not only is that a disaggregated system, there are 14 different entities that make decisions today about whether you open or close schools, and not one of them are necessarily coordinated. There's no mandate on that. So, what we've gone from is basically a school system to what many would say 'a system of schools,' except we have no system. Okay. So, there's no planning, there's no support.... So basically, if you're a parent and you're trying to figure out how you're going to choose a school, it's basic hunger games for you... Families are desperately looking for places, and we have nothing in our community.

The Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) can charter their own schools, but they do not have control over other charters in the way that many cities do have that. So like there's no singular charter board like Washington, D.C. And so we have a hyper—I mean a hyper-competitive environment where you can have all of these various entities working in one geographic domain... There's nobody, literally nobody in charge of the children in city of Detroit. You don't know where they are. You must work extraordinarily hard to figure out where children are, what schools they go to, if they're in school

or not in school. We have no idea until it's after the fact. We're looking at autopsy data. We have no ability to look at projections going forward.

Irene Robinson, a parent at the Memphis hearing, offered this poignant statement:

We are here to say that we have been impacted by school closings and the birth of charter schools and school privatization... We have been arrested because our choices have been taken from us. And, as parents, we don't have any choices. The public officials and the board took it from us. In fact, doing that, who will be hurt the worst? Our children. Every child deserves a world-class education. As you closed 50 schools, you opened up 50 charter schools, meaning where is the money coming from? It's coming from our neighborhood schools. [Charters] have pushed children out, which have destroyed our community, destroyed the history of our schools. Our schools are the heart of our community and the root of our history.

The other end of the spectrum is that in some communities, such as Detroit and New York City, families are overwhelmed by having too many choices of schools and not enough time or information to know which school is the best fit for their children. Caroline Watkins, a parent in New York City, described the situation:

We have 13 elementary schools in less than a quarter mile radius from where I sit in my apartment. That is a tiny little section of Harlem, if you compare it to the Upper West Side, where there might be one or two schools, there are 13 schools accepting kids in kindergarten. That is not choice. That's consumer vertigo. We do not have choice when parents don't have the opportunity, the resources, the time, and the support to analyze test scores and marketing materials and go on tours and talk to principals and talk to other parents. Parents that live in Harlem are faced with complete lack of opportunity to explore those choices.

Hearing participants warned that having too many schools in some communities, while having neighborhood schools shut down, contributes to a chaotic education system for many families of color living in low-income areas.

Some envisioned states having a critical role in overseeing charters and ensuring that only high quality charters stayed open. Dr. Karega Rausch, Vice President of Research and Evaluation at the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, described:

We believe charters should meet a higher standard than district-run schools, and in my home state of Indiana that is, in fact, the case. Under Indiana's grading system, a district-run school has an F for six consecutive years is closed down or otherwise intervened in. For public charters schools, it's four.

In each hearing location, participants stressed the importance of the state playing a strong role in authorizing, funding, and governing charter schools so that all students, families, and schools receive the necessary resources to educate the community's children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having heard all of the testimony from the hearings, we conclude that while there are certainly some charter schools serving students well, there are also a wide range of problems with the operation of charters across the country that require attention. Furthermore, while high-quality, accountable, and accessible charters can contribute to educational opportunity, by themselves, even the best charters are not a substitute for more stable, adequate and equitable investments in public education in communities that serve all children. Our recommendations address these needs.

1. Provide more equitable and adequate funding for schools serving students of color.

Education funding has been inadequate and unequal for students of color for hundreds of years. And the United States has one of the most unequal school funding systems of any country in the industrialized world. Resources are highly unequal across states, across districts, and across schools, and they have declined in many communities over the last decade. In 36 states, public school funding has not yet returned to pre-2008 levels, before the great recession, and in many states, central city schools have experienced the deepest cuts. Federal funds have also declined in real dollar terms for both Title I and for special education expenditures over the last decade.

To solve the quality education problems that are at the root of many of the issues we heard about, school finance reform is essential to ensure that resources are allocated according to student needs. States should undertake the kinds of weighted student formula reforms that Massachusetts and California have pursued, and the federal government should fully enforce the funding-equity provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). For example, ESSA requires that states spend at least relatively equal amounts of state and local funding in Title I schools (which are high-poverty schools) and non-Title I schools prior to the addition of any federal funds. In addition, ESSA requires districts, as part of the comprehensive support and improvement plan they develop for each of their lowest-performing schools, to identify and establish a plan for addressing resource inequities that states are then responsible for monitoring. These resource inequities can include teacher salaries, and working conditions such as class sizes, pupil loads, and the availability of supplies and materials. The law also requires states and districts to report schools' per-pupil spending on annual report cards, including actual per-pupil personnel and non-personnel expenditures, thereby shining a light on resource gaps that can inform a more equitable distribution of state and local funds.

2. Invest productively in low-performing schools and schools with significant opportunity and achievement gaps

Students learn in safe, supportive, and challenging learning environments under the tutelage of well-prepared and caring adults. Participants in every hearing stressed the importance of the type of classroom investments that have consistently been shown to raise student achievement. To ensure that all students receive a high-quality education, federal, state, and local policies need to sufficiently invest in: (1) incentives that attract and retain fully qualified educators, (2) improvements in instructional quality that include creating challenging and inclusive learning environments; and (3) wrap-around services for young people, including early childhood education, health and mental health services, extended learning time, and social supports.

Investments at the federal, state, and district level must be targeted to ensuring that all students have well-prepared educators. The federal law requires states to develop plans for describing how low-income students and students of color “are not served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers,” and to evaluate and publicly report on their progress in this area. Districts should also use funding flexibility under ESSA on initiatives to attract and retain high-quality educators in low-income schools, such as by providing increased compensation to teachers and leaders in struggling schools. This also includes ensuring that early career educators receive additional support through residencies and mentorship and that teachers and leaders receive ongoing professional development that is evidence-based and addresses both issues of instruction and inclusiveness, such as implicit bias and a culture of low expectations.

Communities should consider whether proven reform models, such as early childhood education and community schools, might better meet students' needs. High-quality early childhood education can foster meaningful gains in school readiness, as well as long-term benefits, such as lower rates of special education placement, reduced retention, and higher graduation rates.^{xlv} Early childhood education has also been shown to narrow achievement gaps, because children from low-income families and children of color gain the most from the experience.^{xlvi} Community schools are “both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other

community resources, [with an] integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement.”^{xlvii} This evidence-based strategy qualifies as a school turnaround strategy under ESSA and also qualifies for numerous federal grants, such as the Full Service Community Schools Program and the Promise Neighborhoods grants.

3. Develop and enforce robust charter school accountability measures

a. Create and enforce a rigorous charter authorizing and renewal process. One way that states and districts can maintain accountability for charter schools is through their regulation of the organizations that authorize charter schools. States with the fewest authorizers have been found to have the strongest charter school outcomes.^{xlviii} To do this, states should allow only districts to serve as authorizers and should empower them to reject applications that do not meet standards, as well as to provide serious and consistent oversight. Charter authorization and renewal should be based on evidence of strong curriculum, staffing, supports, community need, and student outcomes. The system should also hold charter schools to the same **standards when it comes to access and retention of students as traditional public schools**. Districts should use their charter authorizing and renewal role to monitor the supply of schools across the district—particularly in cities where many communities lack neighborhood schools—and ensure that high-quality schools open in neighborhoods that most need them.

b. Create and enforce a common accountability system. All state and district educational systems should develop high quality and highly transparent accountability systems that track a range of student learning opportunities and outcomes – including, but not limited to, test scores. This consistency would allow families, as well as district and charter educators, to track school performance regardless of who governs the school. Common accountability systems can also be a tool to inform district decision-making and support continuous improvement. For example, the information in the system can help districts identify high-quality schools and strategically replicate them, while also identifying schools in need of intervention, support, or closure. Data used in accountability systems should be made available to researchers and members of the public.

c. Monitor and require charter schools to admit and retain all students. Charter schools should be required to implement open enrollment procedures, and should not be allowed to select and reject students based on their educational or behavioral histories or needs. Essays, complicated enrollment forms and “suggested” parent donations should be forbidden. Charters should be required to report on student retention rates, and should be prohibited from counseling out, pushing out, or expelling out students whom they perceive as academically or behaviorally struggling, or whose parents cannot maintain participation requirements or monetary fees.

Further, states and district should require “backfilling” for students who do leave. If certain families choose to leave a school, that school’s student body can change appreciably, particularly in schools that do not replace exiting students.^{xlix} To do this, charters, like neighborhood public schools, should be required to randomly replace students who leave with other students from their waitlists (or students just entering the neighborhood or district). While this strategy does not ensure the maintenance of diversity, it is a step toward fairer enrollment practice.

d. Create and monitor transparent disciplinary guidelines that meet students’ ongoing learning needs and prevent push out. To address the higher rates of suspensions and expulsions in many charter schools, they must develop restorative disciplinary practices that support student success. To do this, districts should create a transparent reporting system that shows suspension, expulsion, and mobility rates. For example, Washington, D.C. has created such a system. When data reveal that a school has especially high rates of suspensions and/or expulsions, the DC Public Charter School Board holds a “board-to-board” meeting with the school’s board chair, members of the school’s board, and the school principal to discuss steps the school might take to address the problem. Schools that do not make progress are at risk of non-renewal of their charter. Charter schools should be required to follow the same state regulations regarding discipline as public schools.

e. Require charter schools to hire certified teachers. All public schools, traditional and charter must be required to hire only teachers who are certified. Charter schools should not be permitted to waive any licensing requirements for teacher and leaders working in their schools. Data shows that students from low-income families, students of color, English language learners, and those with low prior academic performance are less likely to have access to highly qualified or effective teachers, whether measured by experience, training, certification for the field taught, or evaluation ratings, and are much more likely to be taught by novices and those who have not completed training. These inequalities influence student achievement. Schools with large numbers of inexperienced, uncertified, or out-of-field teachers place students at an acute disadvantage in their learning. The same is true with respect to school principals, who are also inequitably distributed, although less data are typically available on this point. State and district efforts must be focused on improving teacher preparation, development, support, and retention and include evidence-based practices such as residencies, effective professional development, supportive working conditions, and equitable salaries.

4. Require fiscal transparency and equity regarding the sources of revenues and how those resources are allocated. Charters should be held to the same level of fiscal transparency and scrutiny as other public schools. Budgets should be open and the uses of funds made public. When students move from neighborhood public schools to charter schools, dollars follow them. If students leave or are counseled out of a charter at mid-year, the prorated funds should return to the district. Furthermore, state funding systems should recognize that the actual costs of running a district do not decrease in direct proportion to enrollments due to fixed costs,^l including the salaries of central administrators, transportation, safety, maintenance, and building costs. State funding plans should be designed to eliminate the potential negative fiscal impacts on neighborhood schools of additional costs associated with charters.

5. Eliminate for-profit charter schools

No federal, state, or local taxpayer dollars should be used to fund for-profit charter schools, nor should public funding be sent from nonprofit charters to for-profit charter management companies. The widespread findings of misconduct and poor student performance in for-profit charter schools, demands the elimination of these schools. Moreover, allowing for-profit entities to operate schools creates an inherent conflict of interest.

The poor performance of for-profit charter schools is well-documented. A 2017 study of schools across 24 states, New York City, and Washington, D.C. found that “students attending a for-profit charter school have weaker growth in math than they would have in a [traditional public school] setting.”^{li} Another large-scale 2015 study found that students who attended online charter schools, many of which are for-profit, lost a significant amount of academic ground than compared to their peers in brick-and-mortar schools.^{liii} Tennessee is a model for states and districts in eliminating for-profit and virtual charter schools by banning these schools and not allowing them to receive public funds.

Conclusion

The motivating force for this set of hearings was well-stated by Board member Johnson in Detroit:

Here's the moral walk: That the same quality and equity that a child would receive in Bloomfield Hills is guaranteed for every child in the city of Detroit... that we insist a system, not hodgepodes of opportunity, but a comprehensive system for all children. We started to ensure that all children are provided a quality education... That was the promise of Brown versus the Board of Education... Now, the moral voice, Proverbs 31:8, asks: "Who will speak for those who cannot speak for themselves?"

The answer to this question has to be our charge, and is clear that speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves begins with pointing out the devastating inequality and inadequacy of resources devoted to the

education of children of color in many of our major cities, a condition that has worsened over the last decade in far too many places.

Speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves continues with recognition that changing school governance by creating ever more charter schools is not a panacea for this set of conditions. There are indeed some excellent charter schools – and where they provide high-quality education to all students without exclusions, they make a positive contribution. However, we also heard about the many poor charter schools that fail to serve children with the greatest needs, offer suboptimal education, and engage in financial mismanagement, sometimes pocketing public money to make a profit for private citizens.

Further, we heard about the results of a loss of neighborhood schools when they are closed in order to create charters – the long bus rides for young children, the inability of parents to be engaged in schools far from their communities, and the loss of civil rights protections for children who cannot get into a school near their home and, in effect, have no real choice.

The conclusion of this set of hearings may have been best summed up by Chris Ungar, Past President, of the California School Boards Association and Former Special Education Director in the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education:

Can charter schools be part of the solution? Absolutely. But that solution must be intentional, well-planned growth that takes into account the health and sustainability of the entire public education system, including the so-called traditional public schools that educate 90% of our country's students.

Ungar went on to argue that traditional schools should be offered some of the flexibility charter schools are afforded, while charter schools should receive stronger oversight around enrollment practices, particularly with respect to serving students with special needs, and around discipline and expulsion practices, to end the practice of students being pushed out. He concluded:

Charters have a place as a supplement to local school districts to fill a void when a local district is underperforming or has failed to provide offerings that are absent in traditional schools. What is not viable, however, is the vision of charter schools as a replacement to local school districts or as a parallel shadow school system. It doesn't scale.

Our recommendations aim to address the fundamental challenges of the education system as it operates for children of color in America: ensure equitable and adequate funding; make productive investments in low-performing schools that attract qualified educators, strengthen instruction, and provide the wraparound supports children need to thrive; create stronger charter school accountability measures to ensure access and quality; establish greater fiscal transparency; and eliminate for-profit charter schools.

All children deserve the choice of a good neighborhood public school. Public schools must be public. They

TASK FORCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS BIOGRAPHIES



**Derrick Johnson, Vice Chairman, NAACP National Board of Directors:
President for the Mississippi State Conference NAACP**

Derrick Johnson chairs the NAACP Convention Committee and Executive Director of One Voice, Inc. He recently served as a Mel King Community Fellow with Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Mr. Johnson also serves on the Board of Directors of the Congressional Black Caucus Institute, Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, the Advisory Council of the Mississippi Economic Policy Center, and as an adjunct professor at Tougaloo College. He is a recipient of the NAACP Kelly Miller Alexander Award.

Additionally, Mr. Johnson was appointed by the Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court as a Commissioner to the Mississippi Access to Justice Commission.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Mr. Johnson founded One Voice Inc. (formerly Community Policy Research and Training Institute (CPRTI)), a non-profit social justice organization whose mission is to improve the quality of life for African Americans and other disenfranchised communities by increasing civic engagement in the formation of public policy through leadership development, research support, training and technical assistance. Since its inception, One Voice sponsors an annual Black Leadership Summit for elected and appointed officials and established the Mississippi Black Leadership Institute, a nine-month program to support local leadership development for emerging and established community leaders between the age of 25 and 40.



**Alice A. Huffman, National Board Member
President of the California-Hawaii State Conference NAACP**

Alice A. Huffman serves as Chair of the NAACP Task Force on Quality Education and is President, and CEO of her consulting firm A.C. Public Affairs, Inc. (ACPA). ACPA is a California Corporation specializing in initiative campaigns, strategic public policy issues and grass roots organizing. Huffman has received appointments from three California Governors and served on Governor Jerry Brown's Cabinet. Huffman previously serves as the political Vice President for the California Teachers Association.

She serves on the Board of the Center for Democratic Participation; is a member of the California Democratic Party Executive Committee; and a member of the Democratic National Committee.

Ms. Huffman was admitted to UC Berkeley as an EOP student from which she graduated in 2 ½ years with honors in Social and Cultural Anthropology with a minor in Organizational Behavior. She has also done graduate level work at the University of Pennsylvania, UC Davis and University of Southern California. Ms. Huffman is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and has been recognized with several distinguished awards including The National NAACP Thalheimer Award and NAACP Kelly Miller Alexander Award.



**Hazel Dukes, National Board Member
President of the New York State Conference NAACP**

Dr. Hazel N. Dukes is Vice Chair of the NAACP Quality Education Task Force, a member of the NAACP Executive Committee, as well as an active member of various NAACP board sub-committees. Dr. Dukes is a woman of great strength and courage. Her dedication to human rights and equality is exemplified by her role linking business, government and social causes. Dr. Dukes is an active and dynamic leader, known for her unselfish and devoted track record for improving the quality of life in New York State.

Dr. Dukes is the recipient of numerous awards for her outstanding leadership activities, Ellis Island Medal of

Honor, YWCA City of New York John La Farge Memorial Award for Interracial Justice, Guy R. Brewer Humanitarian Award, and the 2007 The Network Journal's 25 Most Influential Black Women in Business Award, member Ford Motor Company Funds Committee of Honor for Freedom's Sisters, and was honored and received a Proclamation at the New York City Council's Third Annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Awards ceremony at City Hall in New York.



**Adora Obi Nweze, National Board Member
President of the Florida State Conference NAACP**

Adora Obi Nweze is Vice Chair of the NAACP Quality Education Task Force and Chair of the NAACP Education Committee. Ms. Nweze received her Bachelor's Degree from Fayetteville University and a Masters of Education Degree from the University of Miami. Her NAACP affiliation includes being a Diamond Life member of the NAACP; President of the Florida State Conference NAACP, member of the NAACP National Board of Directors; member, NAACP Special Contribution Fund/Board of Trustees. She serves on the following National Board Committees: Chair, ACT-SO Committee; Chair, NAACP Education Committee; member, NAACP Advocacy and Policy; member, NAACP Memberships and Units; member, NAACP Convention Planning; member, NAACP Membership sub-committee; member, Environmental Justice/Climate Control Subcommittee; and member, Gulf Oil Taskforce.

Nweze's community service is legendary. She is a much sought after speaker for workshops and conferences at the local, state, and national levels. She continues to be an inspiration and role model for aspiring community leaders in the future. She is known as a challenger, motivator and orator, through her demonstration as President of the Florida State Conference NAACP. Nweze believes that we must proactively seek to eradicate voter apathy in our communities through the dutiful and diligent dissemination of information affecting every aspect of our community. Education, Healthcare, Unemployment, Criminal and Juvenile Justice, as well as Housing are a few of the issues negatively impacting our communities daily that are addressed under her leadership.



**Gloria Sweet-Love, National Board Member
President of the Tennessee State Conference NAACP**

Gloria Jean Sweet-Love has been President of the Tennessee State Conference NAACP since January 1996. Under her leadership, the Tennessee State Conference has become a force to be reckoned with in the Civil Rights Advocacy and Policy arena. Sweet-Love is a staunch advocate for Education, Civil Rights and Social Justice. Her experience in the political arena as well as her work with Black/Brown Coalitions, Grassroots Organizations and Labor Unions make her a formidable force in the Civil Rights struggle.

She has attained a number of firsts in her life including; First African American Woman elected to the Haywood County School Board; First African American Woman elected as President of Tennessee School Board Association and first African American woman to be appointed by the Governor as commissioner of Peace Officers Standards & Training Commission. She has received many distinguished awards including the coveted Sterling Award for Outstanding Leadership & Influence from the Business & Professional Women of TN; Outstanding Volunteer Ambassador from American Cancer Society; NAACP Kelly Miller Alexander Award, NAACP Benjamin Lawson Hooks Keeper of the Flame Award and numerous others.



Michael Curry, National Board Member, Massachusetts

Michael Curry, Esq. is the immediate past President of the Boston Branch of the NAACP (2011-2016). Mr. Curry has over twenty years of dedicated service to the NAACP on the city, state-area conference and national levels. Elected to the National NAACP Board of Directors in 2014, Curry was re-appointed to the National NAACP's Executive Committee, and appointed to Chair the National Board's Advocacy & Policy Committee and Vice-Chair the Political Action and Legislation Committee. He also serves on the Legal, Image Award and Constitution Review committees, as well as on the Quality Education Task Force and Chairs the Image Award Awards Ticketing Task Force.

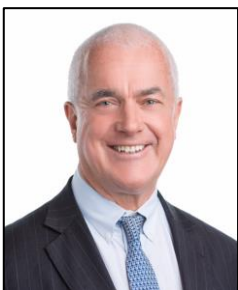
Mr. Curry serves as the Legislative Affairs Director & Senior Counsel at Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, which represents 49 health centers, serving over 800,000 patients. He also serves on the boards of the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, the Massachusetts Non-profit Network, Kids Count Advisory Board, City of Boston's Compensation Advisory Group, and Roxbury Community College. He has received numerous local and national leadership awards for leadership and advocacy.



Da'Quan Marcell Love, National Board Member, Minnesota:

Da'Quan Marcell Love is an experienced educator and community leader with a proven record of achievement leading teams that work cooperatively to accomplish collective growth and results. An educator, constituent engagement and fundraising professional, Da'Quan combines relevance with rigor to achieve results.

One of Da'Quan's passions is civil rights, evidenced by his strong connection to the work of the NAACP. A life member, Da'Quan has served in a various national leadership roles including: national board member, Chairman of the National Youth Work Committee, and Vice Chairman of the Annual National Convention. Da'Quan received his Bachelors of Arts with honors in Political Science from Hampton University, where he also minored in leadership studies as a fellow of the William R. Harvey Leadership Institute. Honored as a Claes Nobel Educator of Distinction, Da'Quan has been privileged to work as an educator in the ambits of both K-12 and higher education.



Peter Rose, National Board Member, New York

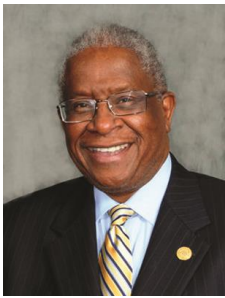
Peter Rose is a member of the National Board of the NAACP. He received his Bachelors of Arts from the George Washington University and received a Juris Doctorate from Yale Law School. Rose is a Senior Advisor for Public Affairs at Blackstone. Since joining Blackstone, Rose has been responsible for media relations and government relations, as well as communications to a broad range of public and other constituencies. Before joining Blackstone in 2007, Rose was at Goldman Sachs for 20 years. He was a lobbyist and political analyst in their Washington office and in 1996 moved to New York to open Goldman Sachs first ever media relations office as it began the transition from a private to a public company. In 1998, he moved to Asia to set up a corporate communications function for Goldman Sachs there, returning in 2003 to head the media relations function for the firm in the Americas. Before joining Goldman Sachs, he was Chief of Staff for Congressman Mike Synar (D-Okla) and a partner with a Washington DC law firm.



Robin Williams, National Board Member, Maryland

Robin Williams is a board member of the NAACP, A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI), and the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference (SDP). As a community leader, she helped develop the DC Jobs with Justice Interfaith Worker’s Coalition and the DC Workers’ Rights Board. She serves as an Executive Vice President of the UFCW Minority Coalition and is a trustee on the board of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists.

In 2003, she was a lead coordinator in the “Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride,” which brought together tens of thousands of immigrant workers and immigrant rights activists in a tour throughout the United States to demand respect for immigrant workers rights. She was appointed Community Affairs Coordinator at the Strategic Affairs Department of Local 400 in 2004, where she was responsible for developing community and religious allies for organizing, collective bargaining, fighting Walmart, and educating the public about UFCW issues. In July 2005, Robin became the Associate Director of the Civil Rights and Community Action Department and was elected International Vice President in February 2015. Robin has received numerous awards and honors for her tireless efforts on behalf of workers and communities. She has been recognized by the AFL-CIO Washington Metropolitan Central Labor Council, Jobs with Justice, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, and has received the NAACP “Keeper of the Flame” award.



James Gallman, National Board Member, South Carolina

James Gallman has led a long career of service to the NAACP and to the school system. He first joined the NAACP in 1960 while he was a student at Claflin University in Orangeburg, SC. He returned to Aiken to work in education, serving as a teacher, coach, and principal in the local schools and as director of the Aiken-Barnwell Head Start program. In 1988, Gallman was elected president of the NAACP’s Aiken branch, and, in 1998, he was elected president of the South Carolina State Conference. In 2003, Mr. Aiken retired from Head Start and began his appointment on the NAACP Board.

Gallman serves on many national committees and has received numerous honors and awards.



**Scot X Esdaile, National Board Member
President of the NAACP Connecticut State Conference**

Scot Esdaile served as the president of the Greater New Haven Branch of the NAACP for seven years, before becoming State Conference President in 2004. As president, Esdaile has led the State Conference’s efforts to ensure quality education for Connecticut’s students of color, including a 2006 lawsuit concerning segregation and insufficient funding in local public schools. Esdaile is a recipient of the Kelly Miller Alexander, Sr. “National

State Conference President of the Year” award.

Born and raised in the Greater New Haven area, Esdaile began his civil rights activism at an early age, working on campaigns for prominent change agents such as Rev. Jesse Jackson and Doug Wilder, former Governor of Virginia. He received a bachelor’s degree in Public Administration from Virginia State University. Esdaile is a dedicated advocate for children. He has worked for the New Haven Board of Education and is the founder of Elm City Nation, an at-risk youth organization geared towards developing communities and eradicating gang violence. In August 2016, Mr. Esdaile became the first African-American chairman of the Connecticut Boxing Commission.



John Jackson, Task Force Member

Dr. John H. Jackson possesses a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Xavier University of Louisiana; A Master of Education in Education Policy from the University of Illinois' College of Education; and a Juris Doctorate from the University of Illinois' College of Law. In addition, Jackson received a Master of Education and Doctorate of Education in Administration, Planning, and Social Policy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. In 1999, President William Jefferson Clinton appointed Jackson to serve in his administration as Senior Policy Advisor in the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S. Department of Education.

On July 2, 2007, Jackson became the President and CEO of The Schott Foundation for Public Education. In this role, Jackson leads the Foundation's efforts to ensure a high quality public education for all students regardless of race or gender. Jackson joined the Schott Foundation after seven productive years in leadership positions at the NAACP. He served as the NAACP Chief Policy Officer and prior to that as the NAACP's National Director of Education. Jackson served on the Obama-Biden transition team as a member of the President's 13-member Education Policy Transition Work Group.

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Endnotes

- ⁱLarry Aubry, Past President of the Inglewood Board of Education
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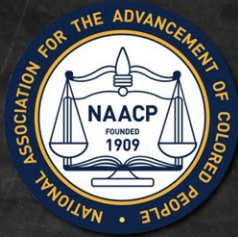
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