



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

February 22, 2016

Honorable Susan A. Davis
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Davis:

Thank you for your February 4, 2016, letter requesting that the President and the U.S. Department of Education (Department) convene a White House summit to discuss the importance of increasing teacher diversity. Cultivating, supporting, and maintaining a diverse teacher workforce is paramount to ensuring positive educational outcomes for our nation's children and families, especially in our highest need schools. The Department greatly appreciates your support and commitment to addressing this pressing concern.

It is important that we acknowledge that our educator workforce does not reflect the increasing diversity of America's students. On January 27, when addressing attendees at the National Action Network's Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Breakfast, I specifically called attention to these issues (<http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/what-we-ought-be>). As Acting Secretary, one of my top priorities is to ensure educational equity for all students, regardless of their backgrounds or zip codes. Providing students with teachers of diverse backgrounds is crucial to ensuring this educational equity. Over the course of the next year, I intend to continue to highlight this issue publicly, amplify the best efforts being made in some parts of this country, and lead conversations and commitments around how to expand and improve our work in this vital area.

We have taken a number of steps to address educational equity for all students, including the following:

In 2009, the Department established TEACH as a national effort to recruit high performing college students and young adults to be teachers, especially students of color and students majoring in STEM fields. TEACH is an independent nonprofit organization supported by the Microsoft Corporation, the Ad Council, State Farm, and the nation's top education organizations and teacher associations. Through a marketing campaign, campus recruiting efforts in four major media markets, and the TEACH.org website, TEACH supports prospective teachers, especially students of color and students majoring in the STEM fields, who are interested in entering and excelling in the teaching profession.

The Department also houses five White House initiatives that assist and advise me and my staff as we carry out the Administration's efforts to promote equity in America's schools. The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans and The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics work closely with the My Brother's Keeper Initiative to highlight teacher diversity concerns. These initiatives also amplify teacher recruitment and retention practices that affect their constituents and communities. The White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities focuses on creating a more robust pipeline of teacher leaders of color through internship and scholarship programs, along

with national recognition of Historically Black College and University leaders who are champions of change for advancing college completion among African American students.

The White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders focuses on workforce diversity in all areas, including participation in government programs to ensure opportunities for people of color. Additionally, in February the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education hosted educators from the Native American community to address working conditions and retention of Native American educators in tribal communities. Each of these initiatives is committed to actively engaging educators of color and working to address the growing need for a more diverse teacher and community workforce.

We have also addressed this topic through our teacher engagement work. Last May, as part of our acknowledgement of Teacher Appreciation Week, TEACH and the Department coordinated a Symposium Celebrating Male Educators of Color. Nearly 200 educators attended. At the event, educators discussed issues of education policy, teacher mentorship, recruitment, cultural competency, and their role in modern education. Through Teach to Lead, an effort to promote teacher leadership, we work diligently to strategically expand our partnerships and attract a diverse group of participants and highlight teacher leaders of all colors. Finally, in selecting the Department's Teaching and Principal Ambassador Fellowship participants, we make diversity across a range of areas our highest priority, and we are proud that approximately 35 percent of our participants have been teachers and principals of color, with over 15 percent being men of color. We are committed to both ensuring that we are hearing the voices of educators of color and putting more educators of color in high profile leadership positions to model what we hope to see in the world.

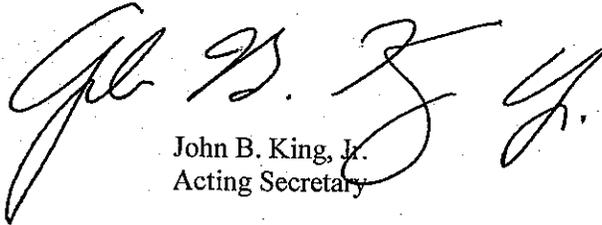
Acknowledging that more work must be done, the Department is working with partners to design two spring events to directly address diversity in the teacher workforce. The first event is a panel discussion in March, in collaboration with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Teach for America, and Howard University, to address the need for more teachers of color in the teaching profession. I will host the panel, along with Randi Weingarten, President of AFT; Elisa Villanueva Beard, CEO of Teach for America; and a teacher leader. The Dean of Howard University School of Education, Dr. Leslie Fenwick, will serve as moderator. The discussion will focus on ways to increase teacher diversity through recruitment, retention, and continued support for teachers of color.

In May – around the occasion of Teacher Appreciation Week – the Department of Education will partner with leading educator organizations and programs designed to attract, prepare, and support teachers of color to host a convening focused on the importance of increasing teacher diversity. The goal of the event will be to provide a space for leaders and stakeholders to collaborate and create concrete action steps toward increasing diversity in the teaching profession in their localities. Topics to be addressed will include recruitment of prospective teachers of color into teacher preparation programs, preparation of prospective teachers of color, school-level selection and employment of teachers of color, and retention of teachers of color through efforts to provide professional support.

We are hopeful that these events will guide our work to provide substantive support to States, districts, principals, hiring managers, preparatory programs, and nonprofits working to increase the diversity of the teaching workforce. I will continue to push our Department to explore more ways to engage educators to address this concern and use these events as a catalyst to promote these efforts.

I am encouraged by our shared sense of urgency around this issue. It is extremely important to have your support in championing the work to improve educational outcomes for all of our children through increased teacher diversity. I look forward to working together with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John B. King, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

John B. King, Jr.
Acting Secretary