

September 21, 2016

Dear Esteemed NAACP Board Members,

We write on behalf of the nearly 700,000 Black families choosing to send their children to charter public schools, and the tens of thousands more who are still on waiting lists. **In light of the resolution adopted at your recent national convention calling for a nationwide moratorium on new charter schools, the signers of this letter—committed Black leaders in education, clergy and public service—ask for a meeting with national NAACP board representation, to take place before your fall board meeting.**

The proposed resolution cites a variety of cherry-picked and debunked claims about charter schools. The notion of dedicated charter school founders and educators acting like predatory subprime mortgage lenders—a comparison the resolution explicitly makes—is a far cry from the truth. In reality, charter schools generally receive less per-pupil funding than traditional district public schools and often receive little or no funding to purchase buildings or maintain classrooms. Despite these hurdles, charter schools are helping students achieve at higher levels than traditional district schools.

Not only is the resolution's mischaracterization of charter schools misinformed, but the proposed nationwide moratorium on new charter schools would ultimately reduce opportunities for Black students, many of whom come from low-income and working-class families.

Charter schools are immensely popular among Black families. According to a national public opinion survey of parents of school-aged children, 82 percent of Black parents believe that all parents should have the ability to choose their child's public school, regardless of where they live. In just the past five years, Black student enrollment in charter schools has grown by 200,000. Black students now account for 27 percent of charter school enrollment, versus just 16 percent of traditional district school enrollment.

There is a reason for enthusiastic support in the Black community: parents see for themselves how their children are flourishing in charter schools. According to the most thorough and respected study of charter school results, conducted by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford University, Black students learn more when they attend charter schools. Black students in charter schools gained the equivalent of 14 extra days of learning in reading and 14 extra days of learning in math *per year* compared with their Black peers in traditional district schools. For low-income Black students attending charter schools, the learning gains were even more dramatic—the equivalent of 29 extra learning days in reading and 36 extra learning days in math.

Because of these results, a substantial number of Black parents want to have the option of enrolling their children in high-quality charter schools. For many urban Black families, charter schools are making it possible to do what affluent families have long been able to

do: rescue their children from failing schools. The NAACP should not support efforts to take that option away from low-income and working-class Black families.

A blanket moratorium on charter schools would limit Black students' access to some of the best schools in America and deny Black parents the opportunity to make decisions about what's best for their children. Instead of enforcing a moratorium, let's work together to improve low-achieving public schools and expand those that are performing well. If a school is serving students well, we should hold it up as an example to emulate, regardless of whether it's run by a traditional school district or an educational leader with an innovative governance structure.

We also want to work with you to support increasing funding for *all* public schools, district and charter. Our children need it. Our children deserve it. Making charter schools the enemy in a fight for adequate education funding doesn't serve the interest of *all* students. We cannot sacrifice another generation of students to the status quo.

Every Black American has benefited from the NAACP's honored history of securing justice, promoting equality and expanding opportunity. We urge NAACP board members to engage in serious conversation with Black charter school educators and families as they consider the resolution adopted at the national convention.

**We ask for a meeting with NAACP national board representation, to take place before your fall convening, to discuss the very serious implications the proposed resolution will have for Black families who want and deserve high-quality educational options for their children.** Black charter school parents, teachers and school founders know what a difference these schools are making in the lives of students across the country. We stand ready to work with the NAACP and everyone who is serious about improving education for every child in America, especially low-income and working-class Black students whose public education has not met the high standards of their potential.

Sincerely,

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