



## **State of Connecticut**

### **African-American Affairs Commission**

**State Capitol**

**210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509**

**Hartford, CT 06106**

**860-240-8555**

Members of the Achievement Gap Taskforce,

My name is Subira Gordon and I am the legislative analyst for the African American Affairs Commission which is a legislative commission with the mission to improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut.

I am writing to offer the commission's support for the achievement gap taskforce draft report. With the largest achievement gap in the country it is time that Connecticut makes closing the achievement gap a serious priority for policy makers. It is important to note that this plan while well intended will not be effective if enough dollars are not invested.

This issue is important to the commission because students of color tend to be in the lowest performing schools in the state therefore having less economic opportunity. This correlates to the high percentage of individuals of color that are involved in the criminal justice system. By giving every student in the state access to a quality education the state will be making an investment in the future and possibly spend more money on education and less on corrections. While we believe that it would be great to have every policy recommendation made a priority there are a few that the commission would like to highlight.

- The commissioner of Housing may develop initiatives that will help improve access to higher performing schools... One's zip code is generally a determining factor of how successful you are. By giving low income renters access to higher performing schools through the rental assistance program this will help to break the cycle for many families of perpetual poverty. The commission believes that

#### *Our Mission*

*To improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut*

with acceptance to the RAP program families should be made aware of the performance of all the surrounding schools to help make a decision on where to live.

- Provide Parent universities in low income public housing sites that support parents are parents in the school house. Involving parents in the education process is essential as this will help student be successful. The Commission is also supportive of initiatives that are geared specifically towards fathers.
- Provide full day, full year accredited quality pre-school for all low income children. For those living in the poorest families the achievement is even greater so giving them access to low cost or free pre-school is essential.
- Provide full day Kindergarten for all low-income children especially in alliance districts where the schools are already behind others. For low-income families it is hard to find childcare when kindergarten is not full day. Before and after school programs tend to be too expensive.
- Facilitate center based and family childcare provider training in cultural competence. With the state becoming more diverse it is important that childcare providers and teachers receive cultural competency training.
- At our schools of Education, employ highly comprehensive admission standards. Teachers need to be the best and the brightest as they are shaping young minds and are a large determining factor or many students' success or failure.
- We strongly support all the policy recommendations that incentivize teachers and administrative personal to work in schools with persistent gaps in academic achievement.
- The state must implement results-based strategies that identify children in state care who are performing substantially below grade level most of which are children of color.
- K-12 school districts that show persistent gaps in academic achievement should provide rich diverse arts and extracurricular programming that promotes innovation and creativity. Low income families are not able to expose their children to the arts and in many cases sports activities so it is important that

schools provide these activities to give students a well-rounded educational experience.

- Hold each district and school accountable for reading achievement.

As I have mentioned before none of these recommendations are useful unless there is a significant financial investment made towards closing the achievement gap.

Thank you for your time.