

Federal Agencies Team-Up to Promote Diversity in Schools and Communities, and Narrow Opportunity Gaps

Will Hold Listening Session in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday

JUNE 8, 2016

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The U.S. Departments of Education (ED), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Transportation (DOT) are partnering to help state and local leaders increase diversity in their schools and communities, and to narrow opportunity gaps. On Wednesday, June 8, the agencies will host an interagency listening session for education, housing, and transportation leaders at ED's headquarters in Washington, D.C.

The afternoon session will bring together educators, researchers and community leaders with policy experts and leaders from the three agencies to discuss voluntary, community-led strategies to promote increased diversity in our schools and neighborhoods. The event will include panels on the benefits of diversity, opportunities at the federal level, a case study on diversity work in action, and community planning. Attendees will also hear from individuals on the front lines who are doing this work, as well as from senior officials at the three agencies who will discuss opportunities to further locally-driven efforts to support diversity.

"Diversity benefits all students in our schools," said [U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr.](http://www2.ed.gov/news/staff/bios/king.html?src=hp) (<http://www2.ed.gov/news/staff/bios/king.html?src=hp>) "Our schools, as well as our communities, should reflect the increasing diversity in our nation. Students who attend diverse schools will be better prepared to live and work, and be active citizens in today's world."

"Access to opportunity starts with a safe, stable place to live and a quality education. We have a responsibility to ensure our kids are getting the chance to reach their full potential, regardless of where they live or what they look like. That's why we're committed to creating vibrant, diverse, and accessible communities that serve as a platform for them to achieve their dreams," said [U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julián Castro.](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/about/principal_staff/secretary_castro) (http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/about/principal_staff/secretary_castro)

"Diversity plays a crucial role in promoting innovation, fostering understanding, and encouraging hard work in classrooms, offices, and communities across the country," said [U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony R. Foxx.](https://www.transportation.gov/secretary) (<https://www.transportation.gov/secretary>) "But too many people lack the transportation options they need to pursue opportunities like high-quality education, good-paying jobs, and affordable housing. Expanding these transportation options is a fundamental first step toward promoting diversity in communities, while also giving more people a shot at achieving the American Dream."

This event builds on the [Stronger Together proposal \(http://www.ed.gov/content/equity-and-excellence-president%E2%80%99s-budget-education\)](http://www.ed.gov/content/equity-and-excellence-president%E2%80%99s-budget-education) included in President Obama's FY 2017 budget —this voluntary program would support the development and expansion of new and existing, community-driven strategies to increase socioeconomic diversity in America's schools.

At a congressional briefing today, Sen. Chris Murphy will announce that he will introduce legislation that also builds on the Stronger Together proposal, and supports the research on the positive impact of diversity in schools and communities.

Research shows that diversity in schools and communities can be a powerful lever for promoting positive outcomes in school and in life. Working together across local education, transportation, and housing and community development agencies, communities can help create and sustain access to high-quality educational opportunities; decent, safe and affordable housing; and well-connected public transportation networks and safer streets.

ED has supported school diversity in a number of ways:

- ED, along with HUD and DOT, issued a [joint letter \(http://www2.ed.gov/documents/press-releases/06032016-dear-colleagues-letter.pdf\)](http://www2.ed.gov/documents/press-releases/06032016-dear-colleagues-letter.pdf) today to state and local leaders calling on them to work together to create real economic mobility and provide access to opportunities for every child in every community by identifying and addressing barriers in their communities that hinder socioeconomic growth and racial diversity.
- The Department's [Investing in Innovation \(https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-marks-success-investing-innovation-i3-and-launches-seventh-and-final-i3-competition\)](https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-marks-success-investing-innovation-i3-and-launches-seventh-and-final-i3-competition), [Magnet School Assistance Program \(http://www2.ed.gov/programs/magnet/index.html\)](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/magnet/index.html) and [Charter School Program \(https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-launches-65-million-grant-competition-creating-expanding-high-quality-public-charter-schools\)](https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-launches-65-million-grant-competition-creating-expanding-high-quality-public-charter-schools) competitions include a focus on fostering diversity in schools. Today, King announced additional efforts that would allow the Department to focus on socioeconomic diversity in additional grant programs in the future, starting with fiscal 2016. The Department published a [new supplemental priority \(https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/06/08/2016-13456/supplemental-priority-for-discretionary-grant-programs\)](https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/06/08/2016-13456/supplemental-priority-for-discretionary-grant-programs) for discretionary grant programs that support socioeconomic diversity strategies.
- The Department has solicited feedback on supporting diversity as a strategy to turnaround low-performing schools through its [School Improvement Grants program. \(http://blog.ed.gov/2016/03/socioeconomic-diversity-as-a-school-turnaround-strategy/\)](http://blog.ed.gov/2016/03/socioeconomic-diversity-as-a-school-turnaround-strategy/)
- Socioeconomic diversity is now a focus area of the Department's [Equity Assistance Centers. \(http://www.ed.gov/content/proposed-priority-and-requirement-equity-assistance-centers-formerly-desegregation-assistance-centers-dac\)](http://www.ed.gov/content/proposed-priority-and-requirement-equity-assistance-centers-formerly-desegregation-assistance-centers-dac) These regional centers provide technical assistance to school districts to promote equal educational opportunities.

NOTE: The listening session will be livestreamed at

<http://edstream.ed.gov/webcast/Play/afc380b8183d4d418b18af9fbd3ace8b1d>

[\(http://edstream.ed.gov/webcast/Play/afc380b8183d4d418b18af9fbd3ace8b1d\)](http://edstream.ed.gov/webcast/Play/afc380b8183d4d418b18af9fbd3ace8b1d). The media advisory announcing today's events can be found [here \(http://www.ed.gov/news/media-advisories/us-education-secretary-john-b-king-jr-discuss-importance-school-diversity-congressional-briefing-and-interagency-listening-session\)](http://www.ed.gov/news/media-advisories/us-education-secretary-john-b-king-jr-discuss-importance-school-diversity-congressional-briefing-and-interagency-listening-session).

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