



March 29, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.  
The White House  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear President Biden,

During a time of unprecedented challenges for our country, there is a beacon of hope for the future knowing that we have an administration that supports our nation's educators. In your victory speech, you mentioned that this is a great day for America's educators, because they will have one of their own, Dr. Jill Biden, in the White House. You also stated to educators, "You are the most important profession in the United States." We appreciate your support for our nation's educators and your recognition of the vital role that they play in shaping the future. Your selection of Dr. Miguel Cardona to lead the Department of Education is yet another clear signal of your commitment to developing policy supportive of public schools and educators. We look forward to your fiscal 22 budget request and subsequent proposals to Congress this year that will fulfill [campaign promises](#) to ensure all students have access to well-prepared and diverse teachers by dramatically increases funding in federal programs that support comprehensive educator preparation and improve teaching conditions. We write you today to request an executive action to establish an interagency working group that will transform the nation's teaching workforce, and, address the unfinished learning that students experienced during the pandemic. This working group would:

- Include Deputy Secretaries from several federal agencies
- Host discussions to include the feedback and perspectives of students, families, educators, researchers, and state and local elected officials from around the country; and,
- Develop a report with policy recommendations and suggested legislation to modernize, diversify, and elevate the teaching profession

We have known for decades that we need to make changes to the teaching profession to ensure that educators are trained, supported, and paid in ways that match their credentials, the demands of the job, and the needs of students. It has been nearly 25 years since the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF)

published a report making five recommendations to improve the teaching profession: overhaul teacher education programs, establish state boards of professional teaching standards, strengthen teacher licensure standards, implement teacher mentoring programs, and create teacher compensation policies that reward knowledge and expertise.

Since then, some of these recommendations have led to policy change on behalf of state or local policymakers. Although we have made progress, there is still work to be done. Teachers are still undervalued, underpaid, and they don't get the training and supports they need and deserve to provide strong, culturally responsive, 21<sup>st</sup> century education for all students. We still need to develop stronger career ladders so that teachers, and particularly teachers who are Black, Indigenous and non-Black People of Color (BIPOC), have pathways to leadership that includes remaining in the classroom.

There is still work to do to ensure that students who are BIPOC and students from families with fewer resources have equitable access to a strong, racially and linguistically diverse teacher workforce. Additionally, there is substantive research showing the benefits of a racially diverse teaching workforce for all students. However, forty percent of the country's population and [more than half of our nation's student population](#) identifies as non-white while 80% of our nation's teaching workforce identifies as white.

We are currently experiencing a life altering pandemic that has forced many educators to teach virtually and will impact all aspects of their jobs for years to come. As we begin to emerge from the pandemic and more students can return to learning in person full-time, preliminary signs show gaps in opportunity that will widen inequities in educational attainment. In addition, the potential for state budget cuts threaten the quality of teaching that students receive, the racial and linguistic diversity of our educator work force, and the support staff students will have access to. Amidst these challenges, we are tasked with finding solutions to close pre-existing gaps in opportunity to learn for our students and repair the working conditions that historically deterred too many from entering the teaching profession.

Therefore, we the undersigned propose the following executive action to take place during your first 100 days to modernize and elevate the teaching profession, and, address the needs of students returning to in-person instruction after the pandemic:

**Establish an interagency working group to modernize, diversify, and elevate the teaching profession:** This working group, housed at the US Department of Education, would be responsible for developing and reporting recommendations for supporting and modernizing the teaching profession to best address student needs, including the needs of historically underserved students, as we emerge from the pandemic. The working group should consider increasing teacher pay to align with other similarly educated professionals, improving teacher working conditions inside of schools, developing career ladders to teacher leadership,

ensuring that the teacher workforce reflects the racial and linguistic diversity of the nation's student population, addressing inequities in access to strong and consistent teaching, and enhancements to teacher preparation and training programs to provide excellent instruction to close learning and opportunity gaps. The working group should also consider programs that alleviate the [student loan debt](#) of educators who are underrepresented in the teaching profession and address subject areas with chronic teacher shortages. The ultimate goal would be to create a final report with policy recommendations, resources that states can access including current federal funding resources to support their work, and proposed federal legislation or programming that builds on existing programs.

This group would convene deputy secretaries or their senior level designee at agencies and departments including:

- Department of Education
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Department of Health and Human Services
- U.S. Department of Interior (Bureau of Indian Education)
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- Department of Labor
- Corporation for National and Community Service
- The White House Counsel on Gender Equity
- The five White House Initiatives on Education

And other agencies as Secretary Cardona sees fit.

To accomplish their goals the working group should begin by reviewing current federal, state, and local recruitment and retention policies and practices, as well as their impact on the teacher pipeline and teaching conditions. Also, identifying federal resources available to states to improve the physical condition of school buildings, completely underwrite comprehensive preparation, provide incentives and increased compensation for educators to live in communities where they work, close gaps in opportunity for learning, build career ladders, and increase racial and linguistic diversity in the teaching profession. This information should be compiled into a report within 12 months of the working group forming and published for states to access. From this report, the working group can suggest new legislation, and robust increases in existing federal programming to support states in their efforts to modernize the teaching profession within a year of the working group forming. This will allow states to begin to locate the resources they need to support their students and teaching workforce.

As noted in your campaign platform, it is important to give teachers a voice in policymaking and incorporate them into decision-making. For this reason, the working group should implement community-informed policymaking by hosting focus groups and listening sessions with educators, families, and students from varying backgrounds across the country. These sessions will shed light on current needs, and it is important

that they reflect the racially and linguistically diverse populations in our country. These focus groups and listening sessions should occur monthly during the first year of the working group, and, incorporate geographic diversity. Using the information gathered from communities, the working group should be able to provide policy recommendations and actionable next steps within one year and six months of forming.

The working group should also be comprised of an advisory committee that includes teachers, faculty from institutions of higher education that prepare teachers, other educators, families, students, advocates, academics, and policy makers. That advisory committee provides an opportunity to create and sustain a regular feedback loop with people across the country who are students in American schools, who have children in American schools, who are working in American schools, and who are advocating at the grassroots level to advance priorities of those community members. This advisory committee will be tasked with lending their expertise and experience, reviewing working group recommendations, and providing suggestions and comments. Any recommendations or reports produced by the working group, should be reviewed by the advisory committee before publishing. Participants should be fairly compensated for their time participating on the advisory committee.

By the end of 18 months, the working group should have produced a final report incorporating community voice and direction that serves as guidance on how we can close opportunity gaps exacerbated by the pandemic, and, modernize, diversify and elevate the teaching profession. Our students deserve the best education we can provide, and access to a high-quality and well-supported teaching workforce that reflects this nation's racial and linguistic diversity.

Congratulations on your election, and we look forward to being a thought partner in the future.

Center for American Progress  
Teach Plus  
National Center for Teacher Quality  
Educators for Excellence  
National Center for Teacher Residencies  
Edge Consulting Partners  
CAST, Inc.  
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education  
Education Trust  
Teach For America  
Council for Exceptional Children, Teacher Education Division  
National Science Teaching Association  
National Association of Secondary School Principals  
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

PDK International/Educators Rising  
National Association of School Psychologists  
Education Reform Now  
AASA, The School Superintendents Association  
American School Counselor Association  
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools  
The Expectations Project  
New America  
Center for Black Educator Development