



February 1, 2021

To: Members of the House Education Policy Committee
RE: Recommendations from the House Select Committee on Racial Justice Report

Dear Chair Richardson and Members,

Thank you for your leadership on behalf of Minnesota's children, particularly this important discussion of racial disparities impacting students in education. Legal Services Advocacy Project writes with thanks for your attention to this pressing need in our state and in support of many of the proposals in the House Select Committee on Racial Justice final report. Legal Aid's mission is to advocate for the legal rights of our clients so they may enjoy safe, healthy, and independent lives in strong communities, including and especially in school. One of our statewide programs, the Minnesota Disability Law Center, provides free legal services to children and adults with disabilities, including on school-related issues. Legal Aid's clients include Black, Indigenous, Students of Color, many of whom are children with disabilities, and we are grateful that you are taking up how to address the disparities and structural racism that impacts students' access to education.

We support the report's recommendations on student discipline. Legal Aid is part of the Solutions Not Suspensions coalition, which has been working for years to end racial disparities in student discipline. Limiting the use of suspensions for Minnesota's youngest learners, requiring that alternatives be used before exclusionary discipline, requiring reporting on pupil withdrawal agreements, and ensuring that educators are trained on anti-racist, culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and restorative practices are needed and helpful steps in moving away from the reliance on discipline that disproportionately impacts BIPOC students and students who have disabilities.

We are particularly grateful for the report's attention to the intersectional challenges facing BIPOC students who have disabilities. We are eager to support efforts to address the disproportionate use of less integrated classroom and school settings for BIPOC students who have disabilities and the disproportionate use of restraint and seclusion, particularly for Black and Indigenous students. These are some of the most pressing issues facing our young clients and we're grateful for your attention to these issues.

Thank you for your leadership on behalf of Minnesota's students and for considering these important steps to address racial disparities in Minnesota's schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MH", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Maren Hulden
Staff Attorney