

## Strength in Diversity Act

**Sponsored by: Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) and Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA)**

In the nearly 70 years since the Supreme Court's *Brown v Board of Education* decision declared segregation in schools and public facilities unconstitutional, many school districts have made significant progress toward fulfilling the promise of *Brown* by improving racial and socioeconomic diversity across and within schools. However, America's public schools overall are even more segregated now than at any time since *Brown*, with a higher proportion today of Black, Latino and low-income students attending schools where at least 90 percent of their classmates share their racial or socioeconomic status. This de facto segregation, combined with the underfunding of schools predominantly serving students of color and low-income students, threatens the educational opportunities of all students and undermines the vision of public schools as reflecting the diversity of their communities and nation as a whole.

The current segregation of public schools calls for innovative solutions to improve school diversity and educational opportunities for all students. While students of color and students from low-income families are hurt the most by segregated schools, all students benefit from policies that support integration. Students attending racially and socioeconomically diverse schools have stronger academic outcomes, reduced racial biases, greater self-confidence, and an increased likelihood of thriving in a diverse society. In light of decades of increasing segregation in our schools by race and income, we need federal support for districts taking on the hard and necessary work of improving diversity in their schools and classrooms.

**The *Strength in Diversity Act* helps fulfill the promise of *Brown* and promotes equity in education** by offering support to districts that are developing, implementing, or expanding school diversity initiatives. The bill establishes a grant program to support voluntary local efforts to increase diversity in schools. Grant funding would be available to school districts, independently or in collaboration with neighboring districts, as well as regional educational authorities and educational service agencies. Grants could fund a range of proposals, including:

- Studying segregation, evaluating current policies, and developing evidence-based plans to address socioeconomic and racial isolation.
- Revising school boundaries, expanding equitable access to transportation for students, or improving open enrollment processes.
- Creating or expanding school programs that can attract students from outside the local area.
- Recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers and improving teacher diversity.
- Supporting the development and maintenance of best practices for grantees and experts in the field of school diversity.

The legislation aims to ensure that grantees invest federal resources responsibly by:

- Asking applicants to include a description of the program, how the grant will be used, consultation with students and families in the district targeted for diversity improvement efforts, and how the applicant will identify and define racial isolation and income level and socioeconomic status.
- Requiring grantees to submit a report to the Secretary of Education with a description of the efforts to increase diversity and information on the progress of grant-funded programs.