



February 3, 2017

Dear Oregon Senate Committee on Education,

New York University's Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools (Metro Center) led by Dr. David E. Kirkland, and the Technical Assistance Center on Disproportionality (TAC-D) led by Dr. Patrick Jean-Pierre, are pleased to support the legislation proposed by Teaching With Purpose that will direct the Oregon Department of Education to establish a program to certify schools, school districts and educators that exemplify culturally responsive practices and competencies. In addition, we are thrilled to partner with this esteemed organization in helping to create a nationwide model for implementing culturally responsive education with this bill and anchor in how this important technical assistance work can be done.

Through our center, we work with school districts that are currently cited and have previously been cited by the New York State Education Department for *disproportionality* regarding the suspension of primarily Black and Latino male students out of school for ten or more school days and who also have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Our analyses of schools' data demonstrate that cited schools have developed discipline policies and procedures that are rooted in deficit beliefs held by school leaders, educators, and practitioners that are also not culturally responsive to the students; and, according to the research, Black students are more likely to be suspended for the same infractions as their white peers, whereas their white peers are afforded interventions.

In 1995, Dr. Gloria Ladson Billings presented a compelling case for creating culturally relevant pedagogy and her case is a part of the foundational material used in our Culturally Responsive Education (CRE) curriculum in our professional development and technical assistance to the schools districts with whom we work. Research suggests that when schools become more culturally responsive, they are more likely to utilize suspension as a last result and that they will rely more heavily on the implementation of intervention strategies that come from the establishment of Response to Intervention (RTI), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) teams, and other resources that exists in culturally responsive schools. Also according to the research, culturally responsive schools, in order to enhance the school's culture of collaboration, work with families and communities for the sake of creating safe learning environments and advancing high quality school climates and cultures. We recognize and understand that one of the most important purposes of Teaching with Purpose is to strengthen and enhance existing evidence-based culturally responsive practices that improve student achievement, improve school climate, and provide student and parent voices.

TAC-D is excited to work in partnership with Teaching with Purpose in order to help to bring their meaningful framework into the state of New York and to help create a sustainable consortium of centers that are committed to creating culturally responsible, sustainable and [more] equitable schools for the sake of all our nation's children. Should there be any further clarifying questions regarding our center and

our work, please submit all inquiries to Ms. Zakiyyah Ali utilizing the contact information included in this document.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

Ms. Zakiyyah Ali
Project Associate / Researcher
Brown Bag, Coordinator
Summer Institute, Coordinator