

National Organization for Women

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May 7, 2015

Mayor Muriel Bowser
Executive Office of the Mayor
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Chancellor Kaya Henderson, Chancellor
District of Columbia Public Schools
1200 first Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

Members, Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

RE: Girls' of Color Educational Needs Are Equally Critical to those of Boys of Color

Dear Mayor Bowser, Chancellor Henderson and Council members,

The National Organization for Women and the DC NOW chapter finds that evidence is lacking on which to base a decision for the expenditure by the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) of many millions of dollars for the single-sex preparatory high school, excluding girls, and to fund other single-sex educational efforts as outlined in the Empowering Males of Color (EMC) initiative.¹ While we strongly support efforts by the District to reduce racial disparities in educational outcomes, there must be a simultaneous effort to reduce disparities faced by girls of color, which result from combined racial- and gender-based discrimination. Research, including several meta-analyses of numerous studies, finds that students in single-sex schools and programs are no more likely to succeed than those in coeducational institutions.² Additionally, the Urban Preparatory Charter Academy high schools have yet to demonstrate that they can significantly improve reading, math and science scores and students' college-readiness and do not provide a successful educational model for at-risk students.³

¹ District of Columbia Public Schools, *Empowering Males of Color*,
<http://www.dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/Beyond+the+Classroom/Empowering+Males+of+Color>

² Erin Pahlke, Janet Shibley Hyde & Carlie M. Allison, *The Effects of Single-Sex Compared with Coeducational Schooling on Students' Performance and Attitudes: A Meta- Analysis*, 140 Psychological Bulletin (1042) (2014)

³ See generally, 2014 Illinois Schools Report Card, [http://schools.chicagotribune.com/
http://illinoisreportcard.com/School.aspx?source=Trends&source2=ReadyforCollegeCourseWork&Schoolid=1501629902501](http://schools.chicagotribune.com/http://illinoisreportcard.com/School.aspx?source=Trends&source2=ReadyforCollegeCourseWork&Schoolid=1501629902501)
[OC](http://illinoisreportcard.com/School.aspx?source=Trends&source2=ReadyforCollegeCourseWork&Schoolid=1501629902501)

EMC Initiative Not Likely to Comply with Federal, District Laws. A racial justice initiative addressing the needs of DC students of color is desperately needed. But there is no justification for excluding girls of color from racial justice. Further, we believe that the Empowering Males of Color proposal (although few details have been provided thus far) likely would not meet the Constitution's Equal Protection Clause's standard as expressed in *United States v. Virginia*⁴ which requires that a government actor instituting a single-sex education program must demonstrate an "exceedingly persuasive justification," and the single-sex nature of the program must be substantially related to the achievement of that justification. Also, under Title IX, stand-alone single-sex schools must provide the excluded sex a substantially equal single-sex school or coeducational school and to meet this requirement, the District would have to establish a substantially equal coeducational or girls-only school east of the Anacostia River where the proposed boys-only prep high school is to be located, according to a statement prepared by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of the Nation's Capital.⁵ Finally, as the ACLU notes, the D.C. Human Rights Act (HRA) provides the broadest protection against sex discrimination by establishing an absolute prohibition on the establishment of a public single-sex school and applies to all "services, programs, or benefits of any program or activity" offered by schools, thus requiring that girls of color be included in the programs proposed by EMC.

Coeducational Initiative for All High Need Girls and Boys More Effective. Therefore, we ask you set aside the proposal for an Urban Preparatory Charter Academy boys-only high school and replace this with district-wide coeducational mentoring and literacy initiatives and all other efforts to reduce disparities experienced by students of color in, for example, in-seat attendance, suspension and expulsion rates and graduation rates. The effort should take into full consideration the educational needs of girls and young women of color in the District of Columbia which we find to be compelling. To be frank, it is disheartening to see that the reality of educational challenges experienced by girls of color has been so poorly recognized in this discussion. Girls' educational needs cannot be dismissed by saying that they are "doing better" than boys of color. Just as boys of color, girls of color are not achieving at the level they should be and DC girls' risk of not graduating from high school is unacceptably high with their 68.0 percent graduation rate (all races, 2014 ACGR).⁶ Studies show that on a range of measures, girls of color are falling behind and, in many instances, are being disproportionately punished for subjective behavioral "offenses." Further discussion summarizes information about the barriers that girls and young women of color confront in school and the lasting impact it has on their lives. While the findings come from research conducted in other urban areas, it can be reasonably assumed to also represent the experience of many girls' of color in District public schools.

The overwhelming majority of students in District public schools are Black with a substantial representation of Hispanic students. The race/ethnic breakdown (2011) was 71 percent Black, 14.9 percent Hispanic (of any race), 10.5 percent non-Hispanic White, and 3.5 percent for other races.⁷ The total number of students in attendance 2012 was 47,548. By contrast, the overall District population that year was 42 percent non-Hispanic White, 51 percent Black and 10 percent Hispanic (of any race). There were 52 public charter schools in the District with 93 campuses and 30,000 students.⁸

⁴ *Virginia*, 518 U.S. 515

⁵ Testimony on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of the Nation's Capital by Monica Hopkins-Maxwell, Executive Director, before the Committee on Education of the Council of the District of Columbia, April 23, 2015

⁶ District of Columbia Public Schools, *DC 2014 4-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates, by subgroup*, Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Division of Data, Accountability and Research, District of Columbia, http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2014_ACGR_summary_subgroup.pdf (note the rate was adjusted upwards in March, 2015 from 64.8 percent for girls)

⁷ U.S. Department of Education, *Selected Statistics on Enrollment, teachers, dropouts and graduates in public school districts enrolling more than 15,000 students, Selected years, 1990 through 2011*, Digest of Education Statistics, IES National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_215.10asp?current=yes

⁸ District of Columbia Public Schools, Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/District_of_Columbia_Public_Schools

The District of Columbia's poverty rate is the third highest in the nation, according to data analyzed from several Census Bureau (2010 census) sources, with nearly 110,000 people living below the poverty line or about 20 percent. The number of persons living *near* the poverty line is likely substantial as the federal poverty level is set unrealistically low. Roughly 30,500 children are in impoverished households – a child poverty rate higher than any other state. Estimates for 2014 from the Census Bureau list the poverty rate at 18.6 percent, compared to the poverty rate for the U.S. at 15.4 percent.⁹

Urban Preparatory Model Does Not Measure Up. The model presented by the Urban Preparatory Academy charter schools in Chicago is clearly not the best solution for high need students in the District. As documented by 2014 Illinois School Report Cards,¹⁰ all three Urban Preparatory Academy preparatory high schools reported very low combined scores relating to student preparedness for college coursework as measured by the ACT: West Campus – only nine percent ready for college coursework ; Englewood -- only 20 percent ready for college coursework; and Bronzeville, only 28 percent ready for college coursework.¹¹ Those low scores suggest that Urban Prep graduates will have a difficult time with postsecondary studies and face a significant likelihood of not attaining a four year college degree. Urban Prep administrators claim a 100 percent graduation, but critics have reported that the attrition rates for Urban Prep schools are significant when evaluating the cohort of freshmen remaining in a graduating class, possibly as low as 62.6 percent.¹²

Urban Prep's graduating students score poorly on the standardized Prairie State Achievement Examination in reading, math and science, ranging from a low of 15.6 percent to a rare high of 38 percent in meeting a minimum standard – nearly all these scores fall below local district and state scores. Given that information, investing \$20 million plus for the education of a small group of boys -- and in a program that has not demonstrated success in helping a majority of its students gain college-readiness -- when so many thousands of District boys and girls require special attention seems like very poor public policy.

District Young Women's High School Graduation Rate is Unacceptably Low. Though graduation rates nationally and in the District of Columbia have been improving in recent years, graduation rates for students of color in the District of Columbia are still among the lowest in the nation.¹³ The Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) measuring the percent of students who were first time students in the 9th grade and who have remained in school through four years to graduate in the 2013-2014 school year was 61.4 percent (both public and charter schools) in the District of Columbia.¹⁴ The nation's graduation rate is 81 percent.¹⁵ The graduation rate for African

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>

¹⁰ See generally Chicago Tribune, 2014 Illinois School Report Cards, <http://schools.chicagotribune.com>

¹¹ Chicago Tribune 2014 Illinois School Report Cards, http://schools.chicagotribune.com/school/urban-prep-chtr-academy-west-campus-high-school_chicago/; http://schools.chicagotribune.com/school/urban-prep-chtr-academy-englewood-high-school_chicago/; http://schools.chicagotribune.com/school/urban-prep-chtr-academy-bronzeville-high-school_chicago/

¹² Mertz, Thomas J., "Some Truths About Urban Prep and Why it Matters," Oct. 11, 2011, <http://madisonamps.org/2011/10/11/some-truth-about-urban-prep-and-why-it-matters/> ;

Rubinstein, Gary, Teach for Us, <http://garyrubinstein.teachforus.org/2011/12/01/miracle-schools-where-are-they-now>);

Klonsky, Michael, <http://michaelklonsky.blogspot.com/2012/03/urban-prep-charter-hype-redux>; and, Ravitch, Diane, "Waiting for A School Miracle," http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/01/opinion/01ravitch.html?_r=0

¹³ "D.C. high school graduation rate ticks up, but wide achievement gaps remain," Washington Post, Dec. 20, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/dc-graduation-rate-ticks-up-but-wide-achievement-gaps-remain/2013/12/20/2acc752a-69c5-11e3-a0b9-249bbb34602c_story.html

¹⁴ District of Columbia Public Schools, DC 2014 4-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates, Office of the State Superintendent of Schools (OSSE), Division of Data, Accountability and Research, http://seo.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2014_ACGR_summary_wnongrad.pdf

American students was 59.8 percent (again both public and charter schools in DC), with a 55.2 percent rate for DCPS African American students.¹⁶ A close examination of the MBK and EMC documents and educational achievement data from other sources indicate that many young women of color in the District are seriously at risk of not graduating from high school. In 2014, the Four Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) for DC girls (all races, public and charter) was 76.1 percent. For boys (all races, public and charter) the ACGR was 61.7 percent.¹⁷ For Black girls, the ACGR was just 62 percent and for Hispanic girls, it was 66 percent -- against white girls' rate of 92 percent.¹⁸ The extraordinary disparity in graduation rates for girls of color compared with white girls is a critical indicator.

A different way to measure graduation is the High School Completion rate which includes individuals who graduate with a diploma or a GED (ages 18-24) finds that Black women, nationally, achieved a completion rate of 89.4 percent, only 5.1 percentage points lower than the rate for white women.¹⁹ Though it is not a strict comparison to make, nonetheless, the difference between DCPS Black girls' ACGR of 62 percent and the High School Completion rate for Black women, nationally, is 89.4 percent -- a dramatic 24.4 percentage points lower.

It is our position that the somewhat higher graduation rate for girls in DC should not be compared with the rate for boys to make the argument for excluding females in any educational effort. DC schools must acknowledge that girls of color are struggling and deserving of our attention and help no less than our boys of color.

Dropout rates in DC higher than national average – girls also at risk. Even though the national high school dropout rate has been in decline since 1967, from 17 to seven percent in 2013,²⁰ there are wide disparities by race, Hispanic origin, and foreign-born status. In 2013, seven percent of males ages 16 to 24 were high school dropouts, as were six percent of females. Black and Hispanic youth are more likely than whites or Asians to have dropped out of high school. In 2013, eight percent of Blacks and 12 percent of Hispanics ages 16 to 24 were not enrolled in school and had not completed high school, compared to five percent of whites. The drop-out rate for grades nine through 12 in the District of Columbia in 2011 was 8.6 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Education.²¹

Boys and Young Men of Color Do Not 'Have It Worse' Than Girls and Young Women of Color. The evidence presented by the *Empowering Males of Color* documents and the related *My Brother's Keeper Task Force Report to the President*, May 2014 (MBK90)²² makes the need for a racial justice initiative abundantly clear but does not

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Education, Public High School Graduation Rates, IES National Center for Educational Statistics (Last updated, May 2014), http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_coi.asp

¹⁶ District of Columbia Public Schools, 2014 4-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates, by Subgroup, Office of the Superintendent of Schools,

http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2014_ACGR_summary_subgroup.pdf

¹⁷ *District High School Graduation Rates: How Does Your School Compare*, <http://districtmeasured.com/2015/03/16/d-c-high-school-graduation-rates-how-does-your-school-compare>

¹⁸ District of Columbia Public Schools, DC 2014 Adjusted Cohort 4-year Graduation Rate (2010-2011 9th Grade Class), Office of the State Superintendent of Education,

http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2014_ACGR_summary_subgroup.pdf

¹⁹ Bucknor, Cherrie, "Young Black America Part One: High School Completion Rates are at their Highest Ever," Center for Economic and Policy Research, March 2015, <http://www.cepr.net/documents/black-hs-grad-rates-2015-03.pdf>

²⁰ High School Dropout Rates, <http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=high-school-dropout-rates>

²¹ U.S. Department of Education, Selected Statistics on enrollment, teachers, dropouts, and graduation rates in public school districts enrolling more than 15,000 students, Selected years, 1990 through 2011, Digest of Education Statistics, IES National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education,

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_215.10.asp?current=yes

²² The White House, *My Brother's Keeper Task Force Report to the President*, May 2014,

https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/053014_mbk_report.pdf and FACT SHEET & REPORT: Opportunity for All: My Brother's Keeper Blueprint for Action,

justify excluding girls of color from that initiative. Even though some are doing well, a substantial number of girls and young women of color in DCPS schools are at-risk, facing nearly as many barriers to achievement and graduation as boys and young men. In some cases, girls and young women of color confront even more barriers than their male counterparts as has been shown in an MBK90 analysis, *Toward Our Children's Keeper: A Data Driven Analysis of the Interim Report of the My Brother's Keeper Initiative*, by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR).²³ The barriers that limit female students' educational attainment leave severe and lasting constraints on their ability to secure economic well-being for them and their children. These constraints create an indelible imprint throughout life, resulting in women of color earning less than men of color, having higher rates of poverty than men of color, poorer health outcomes, increased risk of incarceration and extreme poverty in old age, among other serious consequences.

Data Presented Makes Case for Racial Justice Initiative for Girls as Well as Boys of Color. *My Brother's Keeper Task Force Report to the President, May 2014*, (MBK90) presents a highly selective and ultimately misleading inventor of facts and statistics to justify educational programs such as the all-boys preparatory high school. Girls and young women of color deserve the same intense focus as their male counterparts. Moreover, the best learning environment is a co-educational one. A careful analysis of the MBK90 provides the best argument in support of our position because a majority of the data cited in the report was, in actuality, about both boys and girls of color -- thus making the case for a co-educational program.

The IWPR analysis of that document finds that of the 114 statements that attempt to make the argument for an initiative aimed at boys of color, 89 of these are about boys and girls of color – undifferentiated by gender. The analysis goes on to say, “Of the 25 statements in the MBK90 report that do pertain to boys and young men of color, for five of them the data do not show that males of color are worse off than females of color. In addition, 11 of the “male” statements actually pertain to data or studies that were not gender differentiated and are mislabeled in MBK90 as pertaining specifically to boys or young men. Only nine the 114 data statements made in the report are ones on which males are seen to be worse off than females, or 7.8 percent of all 114-data related statements. “Much of data cited in Empowering Males of Color are drawn from the MBK90 report and does not make the case for boys being “worse off” than the girls who live in the very same communities and households.

Girls and young women, generally, have higher levels of poverty than their male counterparts. A revealing statistic on the MBK website shows that females of color, ages 0 – 17 years, have higher poverty rates than males of color (for every minority group shown) in the same age range, IWPR notes. Additionally, girls of color have a serious unemployment problem, compared to both boys of color and white girls. The statement in the MBK90 is that lower proportions of Black and Hispanic teenage boys were employed during the summer (2013) than white teenage boys. According to MBK90, boys of color (across specific demographic groups) are employed at 15.1 to 23.5 percent, while girls of color 16.7 percent to 21.4 percent – all compared to 28.3 percent of white boys and 30.5 percent of white girls. Clearly, girls of color and boys of color share substantially the same challenges in finding employment.

One of the oft-cited facts in the MBK/EMC discussion is that more women of color are enrolling in college and obtaining four year and advanced degrees than men of color. However, IWPR's analysis of the data finds that

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/30/fact-sheet-report-opportunity-all-my-brother-s-keeper-blueprint-action>

My Brother's Keeper Task Force – One-Year Progress Report to the President, February 27, 2015,

https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/mbk_one_year_report_2.pdf

²³ See generally, *Toward Our Children's Keeper: A Data Driven Analysis of the Interim Report of the My Brother's Keeper Initiative Shows the Shared Fate of Boys and Girls of Color* by Heidi Hartmann, Ph.D., Chandra Childers, Ph.D., Elyse Shaw (February 2015)

<http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/toward-our-childrens-keeper-a-data-driven-analysis-of-the-interim-report-of-the-my-brothers-keeper-initiative>

“young women of color are pursuing and obtaining postsecondary degrees at rates consistently lower than their white male and female peers. Data on students beginning college in 2003-04 until June 2009, collected by the U.S. Department of Education, cited in the MBK 90 report, show no sex differences among non-Asian or non-white racial groups in terms of attainment of postsecondary degrees.” But, IWPR points out that “more women than men enroll in college in almost every group and so more women complete, yet Black and Hispanic women complete at lower rates than white and Asian American women and men.”

A national imperative: unlocking opportunity for girls. In recent years, the National Women’s Law Center (NWLC) has authored several important reports about the educational barriers that confront girls and young women of color. Their 2007 groundbreaking report, *When Girls Don’t Graduate, We All Fail – A Call to Improve High School Graduation Rates for Girls*,²⁴ directed attention to a high dropout rate for girls, at the time, one in four were not finishing high school, with one in two Native American female students, four in ten Black female students, and nearly four in ten Hispanic female students failing to graduate with a diploma each year. The report noted that there was a scarcity of data explaining these high dropout rates, and called attention to the consequences of young women who fail to graduate. Their employment prospects are *worse* than their male counterparts across race and ethnicity; they will experience low earnings throughout life – *less* than male counterparts); these female non-graduates will have higher health risks and less access to health coverage; they are more likely to become pregnant as teen-agers (as opposed to those to stay in school) and their children are less likely to graduate from high school, among serious consequences.

We All Fail was followed on by NWLC’s *Unlocking Opportunity for African American Girls – A Call to Action for Educational Equity*: “One important barrier is the prevalence of stereotypes that adversely impact the educational experiences of African American girls.²⁵ Structural and institutional barriers examined in this report -- such as under-resourced schools, disparate discipline practices, gender-based violence and harassment, and lack of support for pregnant and parenting students – further compromise educational outcomes for African American girls.” Among many important findings are the following:

- In 2013, 63 percent of African American 12th-grade girls scored "below Basic" in mathematics and 39 percent tested "below Basic" in reading, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress. That year, African American girls were held back at a rate far higher than any other group of girls and more than twice the rate for girls overall. In 2009, of all groups of females, non-Hispanic African American girls had the lowest grade point averages.
- African American girls had the lowest average SAT scores of all female students in all categories of the SATs. In 2012, 27 percent of girls met the college readiness benchmark of the ACT science portion, while only six percent of African American girls met the benchmark. These girls are underrepresented in four-year colleges and more likely to require remedial classes in their first year of higher education. The significant wage gap between those with only a high school education and those with a college education is enough evidence that we need to prepare our African American girls for higher education in a much more efficient and focused way. An African American woman who has attained her bachelor's degree will on average earn \$657,000 more than an African American woman with only a high school education.
- Stereotypes are pervasive in education and are a detriment to African American girls’ self-esteem and self-perceptions. The stereotypes that these young women are "aggressive" and "promiscuous" affect their schooling and discipline. African American girls are highly sexualized and subsequently punished for dress code violations much more than their white counterparts are¹. In some schools, afros and dreadlocks are considered dress code violations, essentially punishing African American girls for being who they are.

²⁴ *When Girls Don’t Graduate, We All Fail*,

http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/when_girls_dont_graduate.pdf

²⁵ See generally, *Unlocking Opportunity for African American Girls – A Call to Action for Educational Equity*,

http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/unlocking_opportunity_for_african_american_girls_report.pdf

- African American girls disproportionately attend schools without access to STEM learning opportunities, other rigorous courses, adequate resources, and credentialed teachers. These girls also face inequitable priorities of their schools in which male sports are emphasized and African American females have lower participation rates in school sports than males and white females.
- African American girls are at the highest risk of "being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property." These girls face higher rates of partner, dating and sexual violence than white girls. A majority of African American girls experience sexual harassment in schools and often times change their routine or even their school to avoid further harassment.
- African American girls are extremely vulnerable to sex trafficking and constitute 40 percent of confirmed victims by the Human Trafficking Reporting System between January 2008 and June 2010.
- Young African American women are three times more likely to experience an unintended pregnancy than their white counterparts. By age 20, 45 percent of non-Hispanic African American females will have become pregnant at least once. Stigmatization, responsibilities of work and new children, and harassment can lead to these young women dropping out of school, not because that's what they want, but because they don't feel they have another option.

Black girls' higher suspension, expulsion rates are an overlooked crisis. In the 2015 report, *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected*,²⁶ researchers examining data for Black students in Boston and New York City found that schools' punitive patterns of zero tolerance policies, harsh disciplinary practices and push-out policies for girls of color lead to social marginalization and criminalization. Girls have often been excluded in studies which have typically focused on boys. Based on focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews in two major urban areas, the effort was intended to deepen understanding of the ways that Black girls experience inhospitable education environments that often lead to poor educational outcomes and lifelong disadvantage. Though this study looked at two major urban areas, it may be reasonably inferred that similar patterns exist in District of Columbia schools.

The study found that suspension and expulsion rates for Black girls far outpace the rate for other girls – and in some places, they outpace the rates of most boys. "Data released by the U.S. Department of Education for the 2011-2012 school year reveal that while Black males were suspended more than three times as often as their white counterparts, Black girls were suspended six times as often," study authors noted. Additionally, the data indicate that 12 percent of Black girls, nationally, were subjected to exclusionary suspension. Other studies have shown that suspension and expulsion of students leads to low achievement and a higher risk of dropping out and not graduating.

The finding with respect to disciplining of Black girls in Boston show that for the school year 2011-2012, Black girls account for 61 percent of all girls disciplined and were 11 times more subject to discipline than their white counterparts. This contrasts with the figure of 57 percent of all boys who experienced discipline in Boston schools. In New York City during the 2011-2012 school year ninety percent of all the girls subjected to expulsion were Black and no white girls were expelled. This expulsion rate far outpaced the rate for Black males in New York who were expelled at a rate just ten times higher than white boys.

An overall observation made in the study stated that, "Harsh discipline problems are compounded with failure of school officials to intervene in the sexual harassment and bullying, failure to counsel and provide restorative rather than punitive responses as well as the failure to recognize that Black girls have higher rates of interpersonal violence and the burdening of students with familial obligations that interfere with their education. "

²⁶ See generally, Kimberle Crenshaw, *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and UnderProtected*, African American Policy forum, available at http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53f20d90e4b0b80451158d8c/t/54d24424e4b04f8f824ad42b/1423066148433/BlackGirlsMatter_SocialMediaPacket+%283%29.pdf

High suspension rates make students more likely to drop out – by increasing feelings of disengagement and excluding children from instructional time. For black girls who decide to leave school, Crenshaw noted that the fallout can be severe. “Their children are more likely to drop out of school,” she said, adding that the economic consequences of dropping out can be greater for girls than for boys because “most families in black communities are headed by women.”

Though studies are lacking in this area, the available evidence suggests that implicit biases, stereotyping, and other cultural factors may play a role. Black girls are being punished for subjective behavioral infractions. Researchers have sought to measure the possibility that Black girls may be subjected to harsher disciplinary interventions because they are perceived to be unruly, loud and unmanageable – and not meeting the stereotype for girls of being quiet and obedient. Such harsh measures lead to a greater likelihood of dropping out of school and a higher likelihood of contact with the juvenile justice system. The consequences of dropping out are often severe for Black girls as well as Latinas. The income gap between dropouts and high school graduates is greater for women than for men, which is a critical factor for African-American families because of the many households headed by a single wage-earner.

The report, *Reducing Out-of-School Suspensions and Expulsions in the District of Columbia Public and Charter Schools*, noted that twelve percent of all students received an out-of-school suspension for at least one day. 29²⁷ Male students were 1.68 times more likely than female students; African American students were 5.86 times more likely to be expelled and Latino/Latina students 2.08 times more likely than white students; and, students receiving special education services experienced higher rates of disciplinary actions than student not receiving special education services. Advocates have urged the District to improve its suspension and expulsion policies.

DCPS lags behind in complying with Title IX. DC NOW chapter president Susan Mottet testified at a Feb. 19, 2015 DCPS Oversight Hearing, District of Columbia Public Schools, noting that DCPS ranks near the bottom at 45 of 50 states, plus the District, with regard to Title IX equal athletics opportunities.²⁸ Despite high interest shown in DCPS surveys of female students in having access to varsity sports such as swimming, soccer and tennis, very few of these programs are offered. DCPS does not provide adequate coaching for girls’ teams and many coaches are not certified to coach the particular sport. Female athletes are also treated unequally when it comes to practice and playing facilities, equipment and travel. They are forced to use inferior facilities that are often not easily accessible. They must use hand me down uniforms and often have to provide their own transportation to games and tournaments. All the while, boys’ teams are given the best practice and playing fields, receive high quality uniforms, have all the necessary training equipment and are provided transportation to games and tournaments.

It is apparent that DCPS schools do not recognize the need for and value of involvement of girls in athletics programs. Studies show multiple positive outcomes for girls who participate in athletics programs. These are well documented and include such observations as: girls more likely to stay in school and have higher graduation rates, having high grades and scores on standardized tests, having better self-esteem and mental health, developing better social skills, having higher labor force participation and higher wages, less likely to use drugs and to have lower rates of sexual activity in high school, less likely to experience teen pregnancy and to have better physical health for decades after high school.

Rectifying the deficiencies in District schools’ girls athletic programs should be a priority and, as DC NOW President Mottet indicated, some of that could be done for free by improving scheduling of use of the better playing facilities and equipment. But other measures to become compliant with Title IX will require investments.

²⁷ *Reducing Out-of-School Suspensions and Expulsions in the District of Columbia Public and Charter Schools*, Office of the Superintendent of Education, District of Columbia, 2014,

http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/OSSE_REPORT_DISCIPLINARY_G_PAGES.pdf

²⁸ Testimony Presented by Susan Mottet, DC NOW Chapter, at DCPS Oversight Hearing, District of Columbia Schools, Feb., 2015

Several complaints relating to DCPS failure to comply with Title IX have been made to the U.S. Department of Education; one resulting in settlement in September, 2013 when DCPS agreed to remedy problems and file reports on their progress. DC NOW asked that those reports be made public. A second complaint, filed by the National Women's Law Center, is pending.

DCPS's low ranking nationally regarding equal athletic opportunities is an indication of how the District fails to recognize the importance of equal treatment for girls and young women.

DCPS must invest equally in girls and boys, targeting especially high need students. In conclusion, we believe that a racial justice initiative aimed at improving outcomes and reducing disparities for students of color must include girls of color as well as boys. Moreover, a coeducational experience is a crucially important factor in the socialization and maturation process for both sexes. A co-educational experience helps both sexes develop stronger inter-personal skills and confidence in their abilities. Across all racial groups, boys and young men must have daily experiences in learning to respect girls and young women, to treat them well and to accept their leadership and the same is true of the reverse. The socialization experience helps young people to become better prepared for the roles that they as adults will carry out as workers, parents and as productive citizens. In the context of aiming for racial justice, coeducation is also a great example of the importance of equality – equal treatment and equal opportunity – a fundamental principle in our democracy. Those reasons and all those contained in the foregoing discussion, lead us to strongly object to excluding girls and young women of color from EMC's programs to improve outcomes for DCPS students of color.

Sincerely,

Terry O'Neill, President



National Organization for Women

Monica Owens, Communications Director

[Signed]

DC NOW Chapter