



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
PENNSYLVANIA STATE CONFERENCE

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President: Joan Evelyn Duvall- Flynn Ed. D.

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TO THE EDITOR

RE: NAACP PA MEETING WITH STATE SENATOR EICHELBERGER

The NAACP State Conference of Branches has scheduled an appointment with Senator Eichelberger, Chairman of the Senate Education Committee to discuss reactions to his West Pennsboro town hall remarks as well as his overall vision for education in Pennsylvania.

NAACP PA expects that the Senator could be genuinely imperceptive as to the cause for outrage at the thoughts he shared with his Cumberland County constituents. We know that the Senator is elected by a district population that is over 95 percentage white, with the exception of Blair County at 77 %. We know as well that although they tend to serve children who are over 50% poor, the schools in his legislative district have populations that are over 90% white.

Whether or not it should, these demographics cause people to question the integrity of the Senator's intentions. Why were minority, "inner city" school children the topic of any of the Senator's remarks in such a venue? It was of no apparent service to the constituents present. However, it certainly, thoughtlessly or by goal, planted a perspective about "underperforming schools"; where they are, who attends them, and what it cost to fund them, in the minds of the voters who attended that town hall.

The NAACP PA holds the position that schools do not underperform, children do. Many of Pennsylvania's children score low on state mandated tests (underperform) because the Pennsylvania legislature does not provide sufficient funds for their schools to have resources such as libraries, guidance counselors, programs and essential curricula offerings - all needed for students to meet performance scores mandated by the State Board of Education. Schools that "under-serve" students are forced into these situations of despair by our Senators and State Representatives through the budgets they pass and how state funds are distributed across the school districts.

NAACP PA holds firm that minority children are victims of the demonstrated institutional racism prevalent in education funding in Pennsylvania. The students do their best with what they are provided, yet many leave high school without strong foundations in the core curriculum. This is because they have no teachers for higher level math and science courses, foreign languages, music and art courses. Nor do their



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schools have finances to support clubs and special interest groups. These exposures work together in synergy and emerge as a well educated high school graduate.

It is clear that the term “inner city youth” has become code for “poor children of color”. Young people bearing this label frequently find it more difficult to achieve their aspirations. Because they have suffered the economic violence of underfunded schools, they often have to pay for remedial college courses at the college level. College costs more and takes longer for them to complete than for students properly funded during their basic education.

NAACP PA shares Senator Eichelberger’s concern about the need for guidance counselors. Guidance counselors are not a school requirement under Pa. Code. That is why they are often the first cuts an underfunded school has to make. The NAACP supports amending the school code to require schools to have guidance counselors sufficient to school population and regulated as to their duties.

NAACP PA also supports the opening of access to VoTech for all Pennsylvania students. We object to the idea of VoTech as a default option for any student. Students should have access to these programs based on their interests and passions.

Recent NAACP research on the “underserved populations” (low enrollment of Black and Brown students) participation in VoTech in PA revealed a relationship between the gate-keeping criteria for acceptance into VoTech programs and the racial disparities in school discipline. It appears to be more the entrance/acceptance guidelines than student interest that has created the “underserved populations”. We encourage a close examination of the acceptance criteria for each of the VoTech institutions, as these criteria vary.

The position of NAACP PA is that the law makers of Pennsylvania have created an education system that is failing our children. They have done so without remorse and without accepting responsibility for it. Many of them have then proceeded to, without thought for the human element, design political language to denigrate the very children that have been left without access to adequate and sufficient resources because of the votes our legislators cast.

NAACP PA will seek in our meeting to clarify these realities with Senator Eichelberger, and to help make clear that this is the basis for any outrage he may sense in response to his remarks.

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