



Strength in Diversity Act of 2019

An April 2016 report from the Government Accountability Office found alarming growth in socioeconomic and racially segregated schools and highlighted the negative educational effects for students.

- Socioeconomic and racial segregation in schools have increased dramatically in the past decade.
 - The percentage of K-12 public schools that are high-poverty and comprised of mostly Black or Hispanic students increased from 9 percent in 2000-2001 to 16 percent in 2013-2014.
 - 61 percent of all high-poverty schools serve majority Black and Hispanic students.
- Schools that are highly socioeconomically and racially segregated generally have fewer resources and students experience disproportionately more disciplinary actions than more diverse schools.
 - In 2011-12, only 49 percent of high-poverty middle schools serving more than 75 percent Black or Hispanic students offered 7th or 8th grade algebra, compared to 79 percent of low-poverty schools serving less than 25 percent Black or Hispanic students.
 - Only 48 percent of high-poverty, majority Black or Hispanic high schools offered AP courses, compared to 72 percent of low-poverty, majority White high schools.
 - In the 2015-16 school year, Black students accounted for 15 percent of all students, but 31 percent of referrals to law enforcement and school-based arrests. White students accounted for 49 percent of the population, but only 36 percent of referrals to law enforcement and school-based arrests.

At the same time, districts across the country have implemented innovative strategies to address these issues, including developing state-of-the-art magnet schools, establishing open enrollment policies, or changing feeder patterns to promote diversity. Students attending diverse schools do better academically and the benefits from attending diverse schools continue into adulthood. These benefits included living in more integrated environments, higher levels of social cohesion, and reduced racial prejudice. The *Strength in Diversity Act* supports districts in developing, implementing, or expanding diversity initiatives they already have in place.

The Strength in Diversity Act would also do the following:

- Provide federal funding to support voluntary local efforts to increase diversity in schools.
- Support the development and maintenance of best practices for grantees and experts in the field of school diversity.
- Support 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 (but not limited to):
 - Studying segregation, evaluating current policies, and developing evidence-based plans to address socioeconomic and racial isolation.
 - Establishing public school choice zones, revising school boundaries, or expanding equitable access to transportation for students.
 - Creating or expanding innovative school programs that can attract students from outside the local area.
 - Recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers to support specialized schools.