

Dear president Johnson,

We are thrilled that the 2022 NAACP National convention will be held in Atlantic City this year. But while New Jersey and Atlantic County both have historic civil rights significance and legacies, we are saddened to tell you that New Jersey and Atlantic County are today under a segregationist assault on that is unfortunately being aided, abetted, and defended by Governor Phil Murphy. Despite our repeated and genuine efforts over the past four years, the Governor has steadfastly refused to engage or even consider any realistic and meaningful proposals to end or decrease school segregation. Tragically, he has made school segregation worse while forcefully resisting any efforts to reduce it.

Sadly, we have no choice but to respectfully call on you and National NAACP leadership to support us, and more importantly the young and innocent victims of school segregation, to uninvite Governor Phil Murphy to the National NAACP Convention in Atlantic City this year.

As you are aware, plaintiffs here in New Jersey filed a civil rights lawsuit in Superior Court in 2018 calling on the Governor to remedy or at least begin to reduce the shameful, immoral, and illegal segregation of our schools by both race and poverty. You may also be aware that since that filing, the Governor has vigorously and aggressively fought it with the southern segregationist tactics of obfuscation, denial, deflection, and delay.

But even before that lawsuit was filed, our coalition, a statewide civil rights groups affiliated with Building One America, began to mobilize support across the state for a legislative approach to eliminate school segregation. And while some New Jersey legislators have championed our cause, Governor Murphy has repeatedly and stubbornly refused to even discuss it or even meet. Instead, he signed a bill earlier this year that would allow and even incentivize school districts to separate in the name of “regionalization”.

But perhaps even more disturbing is the ongoing and coordinated campaign to deliberately cause more segregation through a series of unambiguously racialized school district secessions. Over the past decade, despite the clear constitutional prohibition, a group of highly paid lawyers and consultants have been aiding a collection of majority white districts in their decade’s long pursuit break-away from majority black and brown schools. These secessions, blocked as illegal and immoral under past New Jersey Administrations from both parties, are for the first time, being approved – first, by Republican Governor Chis Christie, and now under Democratic Governor Phil Murphy. The most recent being majority white Maywood’s severance from majority Black and brown Hackensack.

One of the most recent, brazen, and glaring examples of these racist school secession is playing out right now in Atlantic County where the majority Absecon has petitioned the Governor’s Department of Education to allow it to break away from majority black and brown Pleasantville High School District. If approved, Governor Murphy will have created a 100% apartheid school district next to Atlantic City, in the shadow of the Convention Center. Since 2019 there have been demonstrations, marches, rallies and church-based public meetings, letters, formal petitions, and legal objections from local, state, and national civil rights lawyers and leaders to urge Governor Murphy to block this latest secession and to meet with our group.

We know Governor Murphy has a history with the National NAACP. But we cannot allow a governor to use his civil rights bona fides to obscure or ignore that fact that he is openly and deliberately defending segregation, aggressively resisting and contesting a desegregation and supporting active and ongoing racialized school district secessions across the state.

We owe it to ourselves as a 113-year-old organization of justice and integrity and we owe it to the children who by no fault of their own continue daily to suffer daily from the stigmatizing, debilitating and opportunity destroying consequences of racial segregation in our schools.