



The Honorable Cory Booker  
United States Senate  
717 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Booker,

We need your help talking to Governor Murphy about school segregation in New Jersey.

We believe you can be especially helpful as you are close to the governor and because of your own powerful personal family story of defying, challenging, and defeating segregation in your own life.

As you well know, as a resident and former mayor of one of the most poverty impacted and historically segregated cities in the nation, racial isolation and concentrated poverty are a lethal combination that thwarts opportunity and cuts short lives that would otherwise thrive the way yours and your brother Cary's did.

We believe Governor Murphy understands this too but not at the personal level that you do. We are afraid that political and legal advisors are unwisely discouraging him from addressing what is a critical and timely issue and a powerful political opportunity to transform and save lives.

You are probably aware that a lawsuit has been filed against the state of New Jersey and the New Jersey Department of Education for the extreme and toxic levels of racial segregation by school districts across our state. As you know, New Jersey has one of the highest rates of school segregation in America today, surpassing all of the states of the former confederacy. And you also know that segregation by race and class has been proven by countless experts to be directly tied to our persistent gaps in educational performance, wealth accumulation, rates of incarceration and even health and mortality.

At an historic Civil Rights gathering in New Jersey this past May, our group convened some of the nations most renowned Civil Rights attorneys, economists, education leaders, historians, and political leaders including Majority Whip James Clyburn, Attorney General Keith Ellison, Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman, Sherrilyn Ifill of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, NAACP President Derrick Johnson, Professors John Brittain, Sheryll Cashin, Myron Orfield, Ted Shaw, John Bracey, Jr., Khalil Muhammad, William Spriggs, Rucker Johnson, Douglas Massey and NEA Vice President Becky Pringle. These distinguished leaders all called for a big, bold

and courageous approach to ending the “tyranny of the zip code” (and the school district boundary) in determining the life outcomes of too many of our children.

Furthermore, as a result of our outreach to school districts across the state and in consultation with these national experts, we presented a plan and a proposal for Governor Murphy for a meaningful and transformative - yet politically realizable and economically sound - approach to addressing the scourge of school segregation in our state. Unfortunately, Governor Murphy did not attend our Civil Rights Summit and has since declined to meet with us to discuss our ideas and proposals.

As a lawyer, you know that Governor Murphy and Commissioner Lamont Repollet *do not need a lawsuit* or a ruling by the court to begin to address what he has already acknowledged is an immoral, unjust and deeply damaging reality in our state. And you know that the litigation itself does not prevent him from acting to begin to address this grotesque injustice through legislative and executive action and more importantly through bold and decisive leadership.

We intend to convene a meeting on November 21, 2019 where we will roll out our plan for combating the segregation of our schools. As a former mayor, US senator and now presidential candidate, we would like to present this plan to you to hear your reaction and to ultimately seek your support and help with Governor Murphy.

Many people believe the issue of school segregation is too controversial to bring up in the political arena and especially during election seasons. We know you do not shy away from controversy - and this issue is already part of the public political conversation thanks to some of your debate partners. But there is no one on that debate stage with as much lived experience as you and no one else with a present day and here-and-now example of both the crisis of school segregation and the historic opportunity to do something about it.

Sincerely,

The Building One New Jersey  
School Desegregation Organizing Committee

CC: Governor Phil Murphy