



June 17, 2022

Richard T. Smith
President
New Jersey State Conference NAACP
4326 Harbor Beach Blvd. #775, Brigantine, NJ 08203

Dear President Smith,

As you are aware, we face an acute crisis of racialized education disparities in New Jersey that have only been compounded since the pandemic. Despite the severity of the crisis and repeated pleas, overtures and approaches over the past three years, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy has steadfastly refused to engage in any meaningful discussion about a policy-based plan for ending the national shame of school segregation in our state.

As you know, our group (the Coalition Against Racial Exclusion NJ-Care) has been at the forefront of the fight to end school segregation and to stop the dangerous trend of segregationist secessions. Our efforts have resulted in the support and participation of key legislators, NAACP branches, teachers, parents, school officials and school board members across the state, as well as an array of national school desegregation experts from the civil rights and education communities. Our coalition (which is part of Building One America and the Summit for Civil Rights) along with our allies (including many NAACP branches) have developed a realistic yet transformative plan for ending school segregation in New Jersey. Elements of this plan are already advancing in the New Jersey Legislature, but Governor Murphy has remained silent and has even made things worse. Earlier this year, he signed (over the objections of New Jersey's education-civil rights community) legislation allowing for more school district secessions under the guise of "regionalization".

Our opposition and militant direct actions have been credited with the state's recent denial of the majority-white community of Absecon's petition to secede from the majority Black and brown district of Pleasantville on the grounds that it would exacerbate racial segregation. While this is a significant win for racial justice and for our partners at the Mainland-Pleasantville NAACP, it will be a pyrrhic victory with catastrophic consequences for the children of New Jersey's segregated schools if it is not followed by a statewide approach to addressing the broader problems raised in that fight - namely the almost complete isolation of intensely segregated schools across the state

For this reason, we are calling on you, as the New Jersey State Conference President of the NAACP, and Derrick Johnson, the National President of the NAACP, to *send a clear message to Governor Murphy that he is not invited, and he is not welcome to attend this year's NAACP convention in Atlantic City.*

We know that Governor Murphy has a history with the organization as an important member, contributor, and fundraiser. But we cannot allow a history of association and financial support to immunize political leaders from being held accountable for presiding over a civil rights disaster while doing nothing to solve it.

We hold out hope that Governor Murphy will have a change of heart and begin living up to his rhetoric and stated values by agreeing to meet with the members of our coalition to begin discussing meaningful approaches to eliminating this terrible scourge before another generation of Black, brown, and poor children are denied the right to an inclusive education and access to the life opportunities that this right provides in America.

We appreciate your support and welcome your help in moving Governor Murphy forward. But until there is some meaningful movement on this issue, we must insist that Governor Murphy be excluded from this prestigious and important civil rights gathering.

On behalf of the New Jersey Coalition Against Racial Exclusion (NJ-CARE),

Rev. Dr. Willie D. Francois, Co-Chair

cc:

Olivia Caldwell
Kaleem Shabazz
Derrick Johnson
Bruce Morgan
Phil Murphy