

Building One New Jersey Statement on S820 Establishing the Division of School Desegregation in in the NJ Department of Education

- Senate Bill 820 can be a first step in moving us closer to addressing the horrendously shameful and opportunity-destroying reality of school segregation in our state.
- But considering the depth of the crisis and the widening gaps of learning loss and life chances for too many children in our state, (and the opportunity created by the lawsuit) the bill, in its current form, is inadequate.
- A bill establishing a division of school desegregation *should be enacted* but only with significant amendments, and as a part of a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach to dismantling all the structures that create and reinforce school segregation by race and class across the state.

- We need a commitment that there will be hearings in the JCPS to consider a package of bills and reforms aimed at desegregation to support the aims of S820.
- The bill must include a spelled-out mandate as described in line 1 and 2 of this document
- The bill must include a budget but only for the specified purposes outlined in line 1 and 2 of this document. This should include contracting with qualified expert/s in school desegregation.
- The director of the division should be a new hire and a person with appropriate qualifications with expertise and/or experience in desegregation.
- The bill must be clear that the division and its director's authority and responsibility include the independent review and evaluation of all described in line 4 including: consolidations, withdrawals, charters, and magnet schools.

We must simultaneously move to address other related legislation:

- **School funding:** Bill S354 Establishes School Funding Formula Evaluation Task Force. We need to amend this to include desegregation objectives and representation of civil rights organizations.
- **End secessions:** Amend the school consolidation bill S3488 to prohibit secessions while requiring an affirmative obligation to create integrated districts. Ban the termination of regional send-receive arrangements and the dissolution of unified districts.
- **Amend the Charter School Program Act of 1995 and NJ Administrative Code, Charter Schools to require charter schools to meet regional segregation goals based on regional economic and racial demographics.**
- We will need to explore **legislation for the designation of regional magnet schools** as a part of a region's desegregation plan.
- **Fair housing must play a role (Amend S1985) to make school district diversity a way to achieve fair housing goals and conversely make the lack of school district diversity a way to increase and enforce fair housing obligations.**