The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

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March 1, 2021

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Dear Senator,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the 109 organizations listed below, we urge you to support the confirmation of Miguel Cardona to be the next U.S. Secretary of Education. All students and caregivers in this country want the best education, support and dignity for themselves and their own children. We join with them, and our coalition welcomes the opportunity to support a nominee who has a demonstrated record as an impactful educator and who has expressed a commitment to upholding the civil rights of all students in America and advancing equity at the U.S. Department of Education.

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights is a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 220 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States. Equal access to education has long been a cornerstone of the civil rights movement. The Secretary of Education's role as an enforcer of education and civil rights laws[1] is central to advancing our shared vision of an inclusive and diverse system of high-quality public education that enables every student to live up to their potential.

Dr. Cardona's experience as a classroom teacher, principal, assistant superintendent, and commissioner in Connecticut have provided him important experience for this role and illustrates his familiarity with the contours of the education system. Furthermore, Dr. Cardona's lived experience as a low-income, English learner in Connecticut's public school system equips him with a critical perspective on the experience of some of our most marginalized students.[2] In his hearing before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee on February 3, 2021, Dr. Cardona expressed his commitment to protecting the civil rights of all students. Dr. Cardona's personal and professional experiences demonstrate that he is capable of and committed to enforcing the law in the service of students and equal opportunity –- as is required of the Department of Education's chief executive.

The COVID-19 public health crisis and a long overdue reckoning with white supremacy and systemic racism have laid bare the significant barriers facing students and families based on race, ethnicity, household income, first language, disability, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity, and pregnancy/parenting status), immigration status, or other aspects of their background or identity. Long term closures of early childhood settings, K-12

[1] Department of Education Organization Act (Public Law 96-88)
[2] See: https://ctmirror.org/2021/01/19/miguel-cardonas-ideas-about-education-were-forged-in-meriden-ct-now-he-will-bring-them-to-washington-d-c/

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schools, and college campuses, necessary to protect the safety and health of communities, have significantly exacerbated longstanding inequities in our educational system. Inequities in school resources and the criminalization of children that preceded the recent crisis require urgent action by a Secretary of Education committed to advancing equity in every action taken across the Department. Dr. Cardona has been a fierce advocate for some of the most marginalized students in Connecticut –- including students of color, students with disabilities, low-income students, and English learners –- and we expect he will continue do so as Secretary of Education.

The U.S. Department of Education is responsible for implementing and enforcing laws protecting students from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity, and expectant/parenting status) and disability and those laws that provide for educational opportunity from early childhood through graduate school. The person responsible for leading that department must be committed to enforcing federal laws on behalf of every single student in this country. Our nation's Constitution, economy, future and children deserve no less. As such, we urge you to support the confirmation of Dr. Miguel Cardona to be the next U.S. Secretary of Education. If you have any questions, please contact Arielle Atherley, policy analyst, at atherley@civilrights.org.

Sincerely,

National Organizations:

AFL-CIO
Alliance for Excellent Education
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Federation of Teachers
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
ASPIRA
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Black Administrators in Child Welfare
CABE--California Association for Bilingual Education
Center for Applied Linguistics
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Committee for Children
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates

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Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Family Equality
Feminist Majority Foundation
GLSEN
GreenLatinos
Hindu American Foundation
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
Hispanic Federation
Human Rights Campaign
IDRA (Intercultural Development Research Association)
Internationals Network for Public Schools
Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL-NCLIS)
KIPP
Lambda Legal
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Lawyers for Good Government (L4GG)
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Learning Heroes
LULAC-IL
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)
NALEO Educational Fund
National Action Network
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives
National Association of Human Rights Workers
National Association of Social Workers
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools
National Coalition of Native American Language Schools and Programs
National Council of Jewish Women
National Education Association
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Immigration Law Center (NILC)
National Latinx Psychological Association
National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association
National Organization for Women
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
National Youth Employment Coalition
New Leaders

PFLAG National
PolicyLink
Poverty & Race Research Action Council
Public Justice
SER-National
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Speak Up Special Education Advocacy
SPLC Action Fund
StriveTogether
Teach For America
The Advocacy Institute
The Daniel Initiative
The National Association for Bilingual Education
The Opportunity Network
TNTP
UnidosUS
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute
Voto Latino
YWCA USA

State & Local Organizations:
AAUW of Georgia
Alianza
ALL In Education
Amachi Pittsburgh
Center for Pan Asian Community Services, Inc.
Coalicion de Lideres Latinos-CLILA
Down Syndrome Association of Connecticut
Educators for Excellence-Los Angeles
Familias Presentes Movement
Harlem Children's Zone
Latino U College Access
Los Angeles LGBT Center
Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities at Kennedy Krieger Institute
Michigan Alliance for Special Education
Muncie Human Rights Commission
New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE)
Nollie Jenkins Family Center, Inc.
North Carolina Justice Center
R.E.A.C.H.
Tennessee State Conference NAACP

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Texas Border Coalition
Urban League of Greater Atlanta
Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh
Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations
Voces Unidas por la Educación
Western CT Association for Human Rights, WeCAHR