



PEER Is Working To Ensure That Every Community Has Strong Public Schools

The Partnership for Equity and Education Rights (PEER) is a new and growing national network of public interest law agencies and grassroots community organizers fighting for education equity and against the ongoing divestment of public education. PEER works across state lines to advocate for expanded educational opportunity for marginalized children and young people, reflecting our belief that strong public schools are essential to strong communities.

Our goal is to maximize impact beyond state and local settings by helping to share strategies, grassroots engagement, model policies and law and policy expertise. This work is essential. Too many young people are deprived of a strong education because of systemic bias, uneven distribution of resources and support for privatization of education.

Since 2008, the number of public K-12 teachers has fallen by 297,000, despite the number of students rising by approximately 804,000. In the U.S. today, school districts serving the largest populations of Black, Latino, or American Indian students receive roughly \$1,800, or 13 percent, less per student in state and local funding than those serving the fewest students of color. For a school district with 5,000 students, a gap of \$1,800 per student means a shortage of \$9 million per year.

Meanwhile, the academic achievement gaps between students from lower- and higher-income families continue to increase, with particularly devastating results for children of color: 82 percent of black students, 79 percent of Latino students and 79 percent of American Indian students scored below proficient in reading by the fourth gradeⁱ. Nearly 30 percent of children living in poverty do not complete high school.

PEER believes that every child has the right to an excellent public school education in their community. Underfunding of traditional public neighborhood schools has created an opportunity gap that results in marginalized children and young people attending unsafe schools that are stripped of resources and supports, with unrealistic expectations placed upon school administrators and teachers. We know what it takes to educate children. In fact, we do it every day in middle- and upper-income communities. PEER believes all schools and students, no matter their zip code, should have the same opportunities and is developing a policy agenda focused on:

- Full and equitable funding for public education, funding formulas that provide increased resources for vulnerable students, and revenue solutions to address inadequate funding for schools in low-income communities.
- A learning environment that positions students to succeed, including modern facilities, technology and up-to-date learning materials, and access to support staff – including counselors, social services, mental health and special education staff.
- Opposing misguided cuts to public schools and the use of public funds to support private education.

The foundation for PEER was laid in February 2016. With support from the Ford Foundation and the NEA Foundation, anti-poverty lawyers from across the U.S. convened with national partners to discuss how public policy can better address the lack of education opportunity for vulnerable children. With national support for educational equity severely diminished, progress requires effective local strategies and deeper collaboration among public interest law agencies, community organizers, families and young people. We are grateful for ongoing support from the Ford Foundation and from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to help promote this collaboration.

Learn about our partners on the reverse side...

PEER is convened by The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law.



The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law provides national leadership in advancing laws and policies that secure justice to improve the lives and opportunities of people living in poverty. The Shriver Center envisions a nation free from poverty, with justice, equity, and opportunity for all.

PEER Partners:

482Forward is a citywide education organizing network in Detroit. We are neighborhood organizations, parents, and youth committed to ensuring that all Detroit children have access to an excellent education, regardless of their race or socioeconomic status. Together, we are building power to make systemic change and win educational justice for our communities.



Brighton Park Neighborhood Council: BPNC is a community-based organization serving the predominantly Latino and immigrant communities in Southwest Chicago. BPNC works on education equity, violence prevention, healthcare access and equity, economic justice, and immigrant rights. BPNC provides direct services and engages parent and student leaders in city, county, state, and federal policy campaigns.



Georgia Appleseed: Georgia Appleseed is a nonpartisan public interest law center with a mission to increase justice through law and policy reform and community engagement. Its efforts are augmented by hundreds of pro bono hours annually from attorneys, accountants and others, who adhere the vision: “a Georgia where the voices of people in poverty, children and other marginalized people are heard, and where injustices that no one should endure are resolved.”



Gwinnett SToPP: The Gwinnett Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline (Gwinnett SToPP) is a grassroots parent organizing group focused on pushing for and against policies that impact feeders into the School to Prison Pipeline in Gwinnett County Georgia. We accomplish our work parent/community advocacy training and policy-change facilitation.



Legal Aid Justice Center: LAJC fights injustice in the lives of individual Virginians while rooting out exploitative policies and practices that keep people in poverty. LAJC uses impact litigation, community organizing, and policy advocacy to solve urgent problems in areas such as housing, education, civil rights, immigration, healthcare and consumer finance. LAJC’s primary service areas are Charlottesville, Northern Virginia, Richmond and Petersburg, but the effects of their work are felt statewide.



New Mexico Center on Law & Poverty: NMCLP advances economic and social justice through education, advocacy, and litigation. An effective leader on a broad range of issues impacting children and families, such as healthcare, public benefits, education, and workers’ rights, NMCLP offers representation before governmental agencies, through the legislative process, and in the courts, to protect the rights and improve the living conditions for low-income New Mexicans.



North Carolina Justice Center: NCJC works to eliminate poverty in North Carolina by ensuring that every household can access the resources, services and treatment necessary for economic security. NCJC has advanced education equity through school funding and desegregation litigation and legislative advocacy. Rick Glazier, executive director, is a former state representative and House Education Committee chair.



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