



May 18, 2021

Dear Secretary Cardona and Director Rice:

Thank you for prioritizing equity in the early actions of the Biden-Harris Administration, including by elevating and focusing attention on the needs of students from vulnerable and systematically neglected populations — students living in poverty, students with disabilities, students learning English, students experiencing homelessness, students in the foster care system, students who are incarcerated, students who are undocumented, Black and Brown students, Native students, and students who identify as LGBTQ+. These students face multiple cross-cutting challenges, and those who have intersectional identities are navigating these challenges on multiple fronts. As the Administration prepares its full budget request, we, the undersigned civil rights, education, immigration, and research organizations, write to ask you to ensure that your emphasis on educational equity continues to be translated into meaningful policy.

We are very supportive of the proposed \$20 billion increase for Title I in the President's Fiscal Year 2022 budget request, which puts the Administration on a path to fulfilling its promise to triple Title I funding in short order. We also believe **it is critical that these funds are coupled with new policies that drive resource equity so that schools can meet the needs of underserved students.**

To ensure that this investment has a meaningful and long-term impact to help correct funding inequities and create high-quality learning experiences for underserved students, the investment should meet three critical conditions:

- 1. Allocate Equitably:** Title I is an essential federal program whose historic purpose is to provide additional funding for students from low-income backgrounds in areas with high concentrations of poverty. While [research](#) is clear that students from low-income backgrounds need additional funding, the distribution of Title I funds could be better

targeted toward that goal. *The \$20 billion investment should be allocated in a manner that is more targeted to school districts and schools with the highest concentrations of poverty than Title I distribution has been to date;*

- 2. Advance State and Local Resource Equity:** The vast majority — [more than 90%](#) — of direct funding for elementary and secondary education comes from states and districts. [School funding gaps](#) are driven by these state and local dollars. *The \$20 billion investment should be accompanied by policies that drive state and district leaders to remedy resource inequities in their existing school funding systems;*
- 3. Recognize the Varied Needs of Underserved Students and Communities:** State and district leaders *should* be expected to target their funds to improve education in the neediest schools (e.g., through meaningful enforcement of the supplement not supplant provision of Title I) and to invest in evidence-based uses; however, they must also have the flexibility to use these dollars in ways that meet the specific needs of their underserved students. *The \$20 billion investment should ensure that allowable uses promote evidenced-based practices while remaining flexible and responsive to local needs.*

We appreciate your leadership in investing in high-poverty schools and districts and look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure those investments drive lasting change. We believe these actions can advance our shared goals of ensuring that all students — particularly those who are currently underserved — have the educational opportunities they need to thrive.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Excellent Education
Center for American Progress
Education Reform Now
The Education Trust
Learning Policy Institute
National Urban League
SchoolHouse Connection
Teach Plus
UnidosUS