Date

Name

School/School District

Address

**Dear (Principal/Superintendent)**

I write you this letter as a means to address and create an open dialog regarding the needs of Black girls and other girls of color in your (school/district). Black girls, and other girls of color, particularly those who identify as Black/African American/African Diaspora, Hispanic/Latina/Latinx, and Indigenous, disproportionately experience exclusionary school discipline, including; suspension, expulsion, referrals to law enforcement and arrest. The most recent data release by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights shows that Black girls are 7 times more likely to be suspended from school, are 4 times more likely to be arrested on school campus and are 3 times more likely to be referred to law enforcement -in comparison to white female students. These disparities are even evident in elementary schools, where Latina/Latinx girls represented 26% of the elementary school female population but 40 % of all elementary-age girls arrested in schools.

Punitive practices and policies like the aforementioned, fuel systemic inequities and outcomes based on race and gender and have profound consequences for Black girls.  These policies and practices, rather than promote safety and well-being, disproportionately push Black girls out of school and further onto the margins.  In a report published by The National Black Women’s Justice Institute, it stated that across the nation, Black girls and other girls of color have described experiencing subjective school discipline in response to their expressions, presentation, and/or identity, and not in response to an actual threat to school safety.  Punitive practices like these, decrease classroom instruction time, are linked to poor student performance, exacerbates trauma and ultimelty, create and exacerbate a pathway to contact with the juvenile court and criminal legal system.

We must, and can do better for all students; particularly students that have historically been the subjects of  racist and sexist policies and practices in our schools and communities.

Schools and school districts  across the nation are actively reimagining and creating schools that meet the needs of all students. And I am writing to ask you to join in with the schools and communities that are working to change the education and life outcomes for Black girls and other girls of color in our schools. Many organizations like, Girls for Gender Equity, National Women’s Law Center, Advancement Project, National Black Women’s Justice Institute, Dignity in School Campaign and many more, have created policy recommendations on the national, state and local level that I believe can help us improve the outcomes for our Black girls.  Below, I have pulled out a few key recommendations from their reports that I believe we can do right here in our District;

Remove school based law enforcement from our schools, and;

Eliminate the use of suspension and expulsion for pre-K and grades K-2, and;

Review and co- construct with students, codes of conduct, dress codes and other related school mandates to include equity policies with a robust articulation of gender and sex equity and student-focused responses to sexual harassment and assault, and;

Eliminate Zero Tolerance Policies, and;

Develop a robust continuum of alternatives to exclusionary discipline, and;

Provide adequate mental and physical health resources in school, and;

Ensure comprehensive in-school support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer (LGBQ) and Transgender, Gender Nonconforming (TGNC) students and non- binary students, and;

Protect immigrant youth and families by eliminating and preventing the presence of Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers in school communities, and;

Support legislation and policies that require school districts and post-secondary institutions to provide support to pregnant and parenting students.

I know that you care about all students. In my experience, most teachers, facility and staff also care about all students. It’s time for our schools to demonstrate to Black girls and other girls of color what it means to support, listen and act on their behalf in an effort to provide a safe learning environment where they will not be subjectively criminalize, stigmatized, or disportpotatly punished for who they are, what they look like, their trauma or expression. I want our schools to be the foundation that places Black girls and other girls of color on the trajectory of lifelong success. This can only be accomplished by creating change in the policies and practices that govern our schools. I know we can do it.

Thank you.

In Community,

Your name

Contact information ( as applicable)