



The National Association for Magnet and Theme-based Schools

REMARKS BY MAGNET SCHOOLS OF AMERICA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TODD MANN

Today, I stand in solidarity with members of the NDD United Coalition as we join together to call on Congress to take immediate action to end the harmful and shortsighted policy of sequestration once and for all. I thank Representatives Chris Van Hollen, Rosa DeLauro, and Barbara Lee for leading the charge on this critical issue, which impacts the lives of millions of Americans and students.

As the Executive Director of Magnet Schools of America, I would like to take this moment to talk about the harmful effects that sequestration has on our nation's magnet schools. Since this policy was enacted in 2013 support for public magnet schools provided through the Magnet Schools Assistance Program has been cut by approximately \$15 million. These cuts have eroded the only source of federal support that is provided to school districts that are under court-ordered or federally approved voluntary desegregation plans.

As a point of reference, there are currently 340 school districts under court order to desegregate, yet there are only 28 school districts funded by the Magnet Schools Assistance Program. This is woefully inadequate to say the very least. To exacerbate this problem the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations has taken the incomprehensible first step to eliminate all federal funding for public magnet schools next fiscal year ignoring the ramifications of this poor decision.

This comes at a period in time when our nation is struggling to grapple with growing racial tensions amongst our citizens and issues related to inequitable access to educational opportunities. Since the landmark Supreme Court decision of *Brown vs. Board Education*, magnet schools have served as a powerful tool to promote racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity in the classroom. Based on innovative theme-based curricula, magnet schools break down traditional school attendance boundaries by allowing families of different backgrounds to choose schools that appeal most to their children's academic interests and talents.

There are approximately 4,000 theme-based magnet schools serving 2.6 million students, making them the largest form of public school choice in America. There is not only convincing evidence that students who attend magnet schools have higher rates of academic achievement and graduation rates than non-magnet students, they are also more likely have the ability to adopt multiple perspectives, reject stereotypes, and develop cross-racial friendships. In other words, students educated in integrated magnet schools are better equipped to live and work in diverse 21st century communities and institutions, helping form the basis for a more socially cohesive society.

Despite the evidence demonstrating the benefits of attending magnet schools, our educational system remains largely segregated by both race and class. According to the UCLA Civil Rights Project, a majority of African-American and Latino students now attend schools that are predominately low-income and non-white, leading to what researchers define as "double segregation." Even more disheartening is evidence that suggests that schools that once had successful integration programs, especially in the South, are becoming segregated once again. It should come as little surprise that these schools account for most of the nation's dropout factories.

During this critical juncture in our nation's history, magnet schools must continue to play an integral role in our public school system. Now is not the time to restrict ongoing efforts to promote diverse and integrated learning environments, reversing decades of social progress. Instead, Congress must provide additional assistance to school districts that are committed to creating highly-quality magnet schools. I ask our political leaders to act now to remove the arbitrary budget caps that are putting the squeeze on non-defense discretionary programs for the sake our children's future!

MISSION STATEMENT

Providing leadership for high quality innovative instructional programs that promote choice, equity, diversity, and academic excellence for all students.