



May 27, 2016

Senator Patty Murray
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murray:

Magnet Schools of America, representing approximately 3,800 magnet schools and 2.6 million students nationwide, would like to request your support for the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) in the FY 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. This program was reauthorized in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and provides grants to local school districts to create theme-based magnet schools. It is the only federal education grant designed specifically to promote school integration, educational equity, and diversity in the classroom. In his last budget proposal, President Obama requested an \$18 million dollar increase to the program or \$115 million.

This additional support recognizes the tremendous success of magnet schools and will restore damaging cuts that have occurred to the program over the last decade. It will provide further assistance to local school districts that are committed to promoting racial and socioeconomic integration in their school systems and reducing the achievement gap among students. For example, with support from MSAP, inter-district magnet programs in Hartford, Connecticut have been able to increase the number of students attending [integrated schools](#) from 11 percent to nearly 50 percent.

Magnet schools are the largest form of public school choice. They were originally created in the wake of the *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision with the explicit goal of reducing school segregation, while providing high-quality education programs to all students. The need for magnet schools is evident in light of the recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) [report](#) that found that students have become increasingly isolated by both race and socioeconomic status, with the number of intensely segregated schools more than doubling since 2001.

The administration's budget sends a clear signal to Congress that it supports the mission of our nation's magnet schools and that it is committed to expanding access to inspiring theme-based programs that will help students transition to postsecondary education and fulfilling careers. Nationwide, magnet schools are routinely recognized as exemplary education programs. For instance, in this year's *U.S. News and World Report* [High School Rankings](#), magnet schools make up 25 percent of the top 100 high schools. Equally powerful, last year the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) [announced](#) that 55% of magnet students met or exceeded state standards in Math and English compared to 39% in charters, 44% in California's public schools, and 33% in LAUSD.

To meet growing public demand and to achieve the goal of equitable access to high-quality, magnet programs, we urge Congress to appropriate \$115 million to the Magnet Schools Assistance Program in Fiscal Year 2017.

Sincerely,

Todd Mann
Executive Director