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National Resolution Calls for Ending School Pushout

Over 180 Organizations and Individuals Representing Educators, Parents, Youth, Legal and Policy Advocates Call for Alternative Approaches to School Climate and Discipline

Dec. 3, 2009 – Today over 180 organizations and individuals from across the country have signed on to support the *Dignity in Schools Campaign*¹ *National Resolution for Ending School Pushout*, a call to action for our school systems to end harsh discipline policies and law enforcement tactics that push too many young people out of school each year. The National Resolution calls for schools to implement positive alternatives that protect the human rights of young people and keep students in school.

The National Resolution is being released as states submit applications for Race to the Top Funds made available under the federal stimulus package. Federal Department of Education guidelines recommend that states and districts use these funds to promote positive school climates and discipline.

The National Resolution points to a range of factors, including excessive suspensions, expulsions, and school arrests, which contribute to the “pushout” crisis in our schools. Our current disciplinary rates are the highest in the nation’s history, and have more than doubled over the past three decades. Historically disenfranchised youth, including students of color, students with disabilities, and students in poor communities, are impacted the most by these policies.

According to the American Psychological Association, these punitive, zero-tolerance practices do not improve behavior, but can instead increase the likelihood that students will fall behind academically, have future behavior problems, become withdrawn and dropout of school. The use of these practices affects not only the student being disciplined, but the health and success of the school as a whole: schools with high suspension rates score lower on state accountability tests, even when adjusting for demographic differences.

“The Dignity in Schools Campaign presents a human rights vision for shifting how we approach education and discipline,” says Liz Sullivan, of the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI), a Core Group Member of the DSC. “Based on principles recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the National Resolution calls on policy-makers to support social and emotional development, adopt positive disciplinary models, and reduce suspensions and police involvement.”

National organizations, including the National Education Association, School Social Work Association of America, American Civil Liberties Union, and NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, have signed the National Resolution, along with state and local organizations from over 40 states across the country.

Over the next week, signatories to the National Resolution will raise awareness in their schools and communities by presenting the Resolution to their school boards, state legislators and federal policy-makers, and disseminating the Resolution at local events, on radio programs and at community meetings.

For Further Information (Links):

- Visit the Dignity in Schools Campaign website – <http://www.dignityinschools.org/national-resolution>
- The Resolution (including list of signatories) - http://www.dignityinschools.org/files/DSC_National_Resolution.pdf
- Itinerary of Planned Actions Around the Country – <http://www.dignityinschools.org/resolution-activities>
- Fact Sheet on Discipline and School Pushout - http://www.dignityinschools.org/files/DSC_Pushout_Fact_Sheet.pdf
- Letter to Federal Dept of Education about National Resolution - http://www.dignityinschools.org/files/DSCResolution_Dept_Ed_Letter.pdf
- DSC Fact Sheet and Letter to Dept of Education on Using Race to the Top Funds for Positive Discipline - <http://www.dignityinschools.org/alternatives>
- Link to First Video in New “Voices from the Dignity in Schools Campaign” Series - <http://vimeo.com/7923794>

Notes to editors:

1. This National Resolution was drafted by members and supporters of the Dignity in Schools Campaign (DSC), a coalition of advocates, organizers, youth, parents and educators united to call for human rights solutions to school pushout. The process of drafting this Resolution began over a year ago when the DSC created a series of questions to ask youth, parents, advocates and educators about what must be done to end pushout and protect students' human rights to education and to dignified learning environments. A draft Resolution was presented to attendees at the first Dignity in Schools Campaign conference in Chicago in June 2009 where feedback was provided by 150 participants from around the country to improve and enrich the content of the Resolution.