

March 25, 2022

Attn: Superintendent Catherine Truitt
Office of the State Superintendent
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

Every Child NC and its partner members have grave concerns about the structure of the NC Department of Public Instruction's recently announced Parent Advisory Commission application process, which is currently open. While we applaud the concept of DPI seeking input from parents in public education, the formation of this Commission has not been thoroughly considered to ensure that it includes a truly representative sample of North Carolina's families. We call upon State Superintendent Catherine Truitt and her staff at the Department of Public Instruction to make changes including, but not limited to, the following:

Accessibility

In a state where 18% of our students report that a language other than English is primarily spoken in their homes, the Committee application on the DPI website is available only in English. **We call upon DPI to make the application, all subsequent documents, and both the review and selection process available to the public in Spanish, and to ensure language accessibility in all Committee meetings, events and reports.**

The application currently requires prospective Committee members to provide a recommendation from either school personnel or a public figure. This presents a significant bureaucratic barrier to parents who, though they are invested in their child's education, do not know school personnel well enough to seek a personal recommendation, and who do not have access to public officials. We fail to see what purpose this requirement fulfills, and **we call upon Catherine Truitt to remove the recommendation requirement for candidates.**

Participation on the Committee requires a two-year commitment, and members will attend monthly meetings either virtually or in person. This represents a significant financial burden to families who cannot commit hours of unpaid time every month or afford the added expense of finding childcare and traveling to Committee meetings. Moreover, such families may lack access to the technology required to attend virtual meetings. Because of these expenses, the Committee is highly likely to be composed of wealthier families that do not accurately reflect the perspective of most of NC's families. **We call upon the Department of Public Instruction to create a plan to compensate Committee members for their time, travel and childcare, to encourage a more economically diverse Committee profile. We further call for DPI to provide Committee members with the technology appropriate to ensure that they may participate in virtual meetings, and for DPI to commit to holding in-person meetings in different regions throughout the State, to provide equity in access for families who would prefer in-person engagement but who cannot participate in extensive travel.**

Transparency

Neither DPI nor Superintendent Truitt have provided any information about how members of the Committee will be chosen; a concern amplified by the several questions in the application that seem to solicit the applicant's ideological opinions about NC's role in education. This raises concerns that the Committee will not be truly representative of the people of NC, but will consist of appointees selected because their views are ideologically aligned with Superintendent Truitt's. **We call upon DPI to release the selection rubric used to evaluate applicants, the specific process by which Committee members will be selected, and the names of the people responsible both for screening applications and for making final decisions on Committee appointments, and to be open to suggestions for improvement to the rubric that has been selected. We further call for the answers of all selected applicants to be made public, so that NC's citizens may evaluate for themselves whether the Committee represents the ideological diversity of North Carolina.**

As noted above, Committee members are making a significant, two-year commitment but DPI has not released any information about what happens if a family cannot fulfill that commitment. Will their seat be filled with an alternate appointee? How will such alternates be chosen? **We call upon DPI to provide a clear statement addressing how changes to the Committee will be handled.**

Inclusivity

The announcement specifies, "The commission's membership will include parents with students enrolled in traditional public schools, charter schools, as well as homeschool and private schools to ensure broad representation of all school choice options across the state and include diverse feedback." This does not indicate that there is intention in including the voices and experiences of people of color, which make up over half of North Carolina public school students. **We call upon Superintendent Truitt and DPI to ensure that the Committee is designed with intention to be inclusive of significant and proportional minority representation and to make public the mechanisms by which such representation is achieved.**

Similarly, the vast majority of K-12 students in NC attend public schools, yet the Committee reserves a percentage of seats for parents of private, charter, or homeschool students that is disproportionate to their existence in NC's population. **We call upon DPI to re-think and reframe the composition of the Committee such that public school families are adequately, equitably, and proportionally represented.**

Finally, while we note that parents are important stakeholders in public education, they are not the only stakeholders. There is currently no specified intention towards placement on the Commission for educators or even for any K-12 students. We believe the voices and collaboration of both are critically important in this process. Accordingly, **we call upon DPI to open up Commission participation to educators and students.**

While it is necessary for parents to have a seat at the table, it is equally important that the table not be reflective of the same barriers and inequities that are all too present in local school districts, statewide. With intention, together we can shape something new that addresses the shortcomings of our past and creates room to cultivate the educational success of all of our students. We believe that the suggested changes will create the access needed to ensure that this commission is fully equipped to “equitably engage families in district and policy-level decisions,” as Superintendent Truitt has stated is her desire.

Signed:

Every Child NC Coordinating Committee Members:

Education Justice Alliance, Letha Muhammad letha@ejanc.org

Advance Carolina, Marcus Bass marcus@advancecarolina.org

NC Justice Center, Matt Ellinwood matt@ncjustice.org - Sarah Montgomery sarahm@ncjustice.org

NC Early Education Coalition, Elaine Zuckerman elainez@ncearlyeducationcoalition.org

ISLA NC (Immersion for Spanish Language Acquisition): Jenice Ramirez, jenice@laislaschool.org

Action4Equity, Kellie Easton, kellie@eastonreidgroup.com

Save Our Schools NC: Susan Book, space.pope@gmail.com- Renee Sekel, ra_sekel@yahoo.com

[Empowered Parents in Community](#)

[League of Women Voters](#)

[Hoke County NAACP](#)

[Pastors for NC Children](#)

[uCANcomplain](#)

[Book Harvest](#)

[LatinxED](#)

[A Better Chance A Better Community](#)

Communities for the Education of Every Child NC is a community-led, statewide coalition of organizations, parents, teachers, and students who advocate for every child's constitutional right to a sound, basic education. Our goal is that all students, particularly underserved and vulnerable student groups, receive the funding and support they need to realize the education promised to them under the North Carolina Constitution.