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Council of the Great City Schools

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Urban Schools Announce Unprecedented Commitment to Improve Achievement of Young Men of Color

Great City Schools Back White House My Brother's Keeper Initiative

WASHINGTON, July 21 – Leaders of 60 of the largest urban school systems in the country have joined in a first-ever collective commitment to improve educational outcomes for boys and young men of color by implementing a set of evidence-based strategies that range from early childhood to graduation, the Council of the Great City Schools announced today at a White House event with President Obama. Collectively, the school systems educate a third or more of America's African American and Latino students and nearly forty percent of low-income boys and young men of color.

In a call to action by the Council of the Great City Schools, the primary coalition of the nation's urban schools, each of the school systems support boosting efforts to prepare males of color for college and careers, to reduce the disproportionate number who drop out of school or who are suspended, and to help them succeed.

With such a large portion of the country's school-age African American males and Hispanic males enrolled in big-city public schools, urban-school leaders agree that they have an obligation to teach all students to the highest academic standards and prepare them for today's global society.

"Our job as urban educators is not to reflect or perpetuate the inequities that too many of our males of color face; our job is to eliminate those inequities—and that is what we pledge to do," stressed Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. "We are pleased to join forces today with the White House, the U.S. Department of Education, and our other partners in an unprecedented shared commitment to improve the educational and social opportunities of our young men of color," he added.

In "A Pledge by America's Great City Schools," each of the 60 urban school systems committed to carrying out 11 specific actions, which include:

- Ensuring that pre-school efforts better serve males of color and their academic and social development;
- Adopting and implementing elementary and middle school efforts to increase "the pipeline" of males of color who are on track to succeed in high school, and increasing the numbers participating in advanced placement, honors, and gifted and talented programs;
- Keeping data and establishing protocols to monitor the progress of males of color and intervene at the earliest warning signs of problems;

- Reducing the disproportionate number of males of color who are absent, suspended, expelled, or placed inappropriately in special education classes; and
- Working to transform high schools with low graduation rates among males of color and striving to increase the numbers of males of color and others who complete the FAFSA forms for college aid.

The Council is also announcing a partnership with the College Board to work jointly to increase the numbers of males of color participating and succeeding in Advanced Placement (AP) classes in our urban public schools.

In late 2010, the Council of the Great City Schools sounded an alarm with the release of an eye-opening report indicating that young black males in America are in a state of crisis.

The widely publicized report – *A Call for Change: The Social and Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcomes of Black Males in Urban Schools* – led to Council testimony before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families, and prompted the organization to release a companion analysis of Hispanic students.

The *Call for Change* study called for a White House initiative, noting that the education, social, and employment outcomes of African American males are equivalent to a “national catastrophe” requiring coordinated national attention.

Since the release of the reports, the Council established internal and external advisory committees to guide the urban school coalition on its work with males of color. It commissioned a series of papers by the nation’s leading authorities to propose strategies for improving urban school efforts on behalf of African American males. And in August 2012, the authors of the papers converged at a summit with the U.S. Department of Education and the White House to discuss strategies to improve outcomes for African American males.

The work of the authors has culminated in the development of a Council e-book titled *A Call for Change: Providing Solutions for Black Male Achievement*, which is available at no cost through Amazon and other outlets.

Other Council activities to improve the outcomes of males of color include:

- A national town hall meeting late last year on race, language, and culture, moderated by noted Harvard law professor Charles Ogletree, taped and televised on PBS
- A study titled *Today’s Promise, Tomorrow’s Future: The Social and Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcomes of Hispanics in Urban Schools*, as well as reports on English language learners; and
- Student and urban school-district surveys to gauge the challenges and possible interventions needed to improve the outcomes of males of color.

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A Pledge by America's Great City Schools

- Whereas, some 32 percent of the nation's African American males and some 39 percent of the nation's Hispanic males attend school each day in one of the Great City School systems; and
- Whereas, the academic achievement of Males of Color in the nation's urban school systems and nationally is well below what it needs to be for these young people to be successful in college and careers; and
- Whereas, disproportionate numbers of Males of Color drop out of urban schools and often have low attendance rates; and
- Whereas, Males of Color disproportionately attend under-resourced schools and are taught by the least-effective teachers; and
- Whereas, the nation's Great City Schools have an obligation to teach all students under their aegis to the highest academic standards and prepare them for successful participation in our nation:
- Be It Therefore Resolved that, the Great City Schools pledge to ensure that its pre-school efforts better serve Males of Color and their academic and social development, and
- That the Great City Schools will adopt and implement elementary and middle school efforts to increase the pipeline of Males of Color who are succeeding academically and socially in our urban schools and who are on track to succeed in high school, and
- That the Great City Schools will keep data and establish protocols that will allow it to monitor the progress of Males of Color and other students in our schools and appropriately intervene at the earliest warning signs; and
- That the Great City Schools will adopt and implement promising and proven approaches to reducing absenteeism, especially chronic absenteeism, among Males of Color, and
- That the Great City Schools will develop initiatives and regularly report on progress in retaining Males of Color in school and reducing disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates, and
- That the Great City Schools will develop initiatives and regularly report on progress in increasing the numbers of our Males of Color and other students participating in advanced placement and honors courses and gifted and talented programs, and

- That the Great City Schools will strongly encourage colleges of education to adopt curriculum that addresses the academic, cultural, and social needs of Males of Color, and that the district will maintain data on how these teachers do with our Males of Color, and
- That the Great City Schools will develop initiatives and regularly report on progress in increasing the numbers of Males of Color and other students who complete the FAFSA, and
- That the Great City Schools will work to reduce as appropriate the disproportionate numbers of Males of Color in special education courses, and
- That the Great City Schools will work to transform high schools with persistently low graduation rates among Males of Color and others and to provide literacy and engagement initiatives with parents.
- That the Great City Schools will engage in a broader discussion and examination of how issues of race, language, and culture affect the work of our district.

Council of the Great City Schools

Albuquerque Public Schools	Anchorage School District
Atlanta Public Schools	Austin Public Schools
Baltimore City Public Schools	Birmingham Public Schools
Boston Public Schools	Bridgeport Public Schools
Broward County Public Schools	Buffalo Public Schools
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools	Chicago Public Schools
Cincinnati Public Schools	Clark County (Las Vegas) Public Schools
Cleveland Metropolitan School District	Columbus City School District
Dallas Independent School District	Dayton Public Schools
Denver Public Schools	Des Moines Public Schools
Detroit Public Schools	District of Columbia Public Schools
Duval County (Jacksonville) Public Schools	East Baton Rouge Parish School System
El Paso Independent School District	Fort Worth Independent School District
Fresno Unified School District	Guilford County (Greensboro) Public Schools
Hillsborough County (Tampa) Public Schools	Houston Independent School District
Indianapolis Public Schools	Jackson Public Schools
Jefferson County (Louisville) Public Schools	Kansas City (MO) Public Schools

Long Beach Unified School District	Los Angeles Unified School District
Miami-Dade County Public Schools	Milwaukee Public Schools
Minneapolis Public Schools	Nashville Public Schools
Newark Public Schools	Norfolk Public Schools
Oakland Unified School District	Oklahoma City Public Schools
Omaha Public Schools	Orange County (Orlando) Public Schools
Palm Beach School District	Philadelphia School District
Pittsburgh Public Schools	Portland Public Schools
Providence Public Schools	Richmond Public Schools
Rochester City School District	Sacramento City Unified School District
Saint Paul Public Schools	San Diego Unified School District
San Francisco Public Schools	Seattle Public Schools
Shelby County (Memphis) Public Schools	Toledo Public Schools