



Rethinking Layoff Policy to
Protect Teacher Diversity.

To Our Nation's Governors,

We represent a growing coalition of national organizations with combined expertise on teacher quality, teacher diversity, teacher preparation, school finance, and more. Together, we are committed to ensuring all students have access to the high-quality, diverse teacher workforce that we know they need in order to thrive in the classroom. However, despite several years of progress on increasing this access, we are at risk of moving backward due to flawed state and district policies and a looming fiscal cliff. We ask that you act to avoid this detrimental impact before it's too late.

The impact of a more diverse workforce on the social-emotional and academic outcomes of all students, but particularly students of color, is well-documented. One study has even shown that having just one Black teacher, for one year in elementary school, makes a Black child 13 percent more likely to graduate from high school. The single most important way to support our students of color amidst unprecedented challenges—growing mental health needs, decreasing academic outcomes, and widening opportunity gaps, among others—is by recruiting and retaining a great and diverse teacher workforce. And yet, America's public school teaching workforce does not reflect the diversity of its students—50 percent of public school students identify as people of color, but only 20 percent of their teachers do.

We are encouraged to see progress as a result of investments many of you have made in diversifying your teacher workforce—nearly \$100 million across districts and states over the last decade. Nationally, teachers of color are now 1.5 times more likely to be in the first two years of their career than are white teachers, relative to their representation in the profession overall. This represents significant progress in diversifying the workforce, and is worth celebrating. However, these efforts could unravel if an approaching fiscal cliff—created by declining student enrollment, the expiration of federal relief funds, and a potential recession—leads to layoffs in states and districts that use antiquated layoff policies based solely on seniority to decide who stays and who goes. Because teachers of color are disproportionately new to the profession, they will be the first to be let go. Among them could be district and state teachers of the year, who have been laid off in districts across the country as a result of these policies in the past.

Research from TNTP and Educators for Excellence in “So All Students Thrive: Rethinking Layoff Policy to Protect Teacher Diversity” finds that this disproportionate representation holds true in nearly every state, and in some states, such as Massachusetts and New York, teachers of color are more than twice as likely to be early in their career.

To avoid disproportionately laying off teachers of color and unraveling critical efforts to diversify the workforce and thus close opportunity gaps, the report recommends that states and districts create multiple-measure systems or incorporate carve outs that consider teachers' cultural or linguistic expertise, their unique contributions to the school community, their placement at a hard to staff position or school, or their membership in an underrepresented population when making layoff decisions.

The good news is that you, as your state's leader, can do something—starting with examining your own state's policies on teacher layoffs.

- If you lead one of the 13 states that requires that tenure or seniority be used to determine layoffs, change it to protect teacher diversity by incorporating one of the considerations listed above into your layoff system.
- If you lead one of the 19 states that leaves the decision up to districts, require them to update their policies to protect teacher diversity in the face of potential layoffs.
- If you lead one of the 19 states that already prohibits using seniority as the primary decision-making factor, consider requiring, rather than allowing, that diversity be taken into consideration.

We hope this report provides you with the data necessary to act as a staunch advocate for protecting teacher diversity in your state, so that all students thrive. We ask that you call on your legislature to protect and expand access to a high-quality, diverse workforce for every student. E4E and TNTP are happy to discuss the report's findings further with you or support you in analyzing your state's specific legislative context.

Thank you,

