



# Non-Diverse, Inequitable, Uninclusive Schools Are No Good for Georgia's Students

Testimony Presented to the Georgia Senate Higher Education Committee Hearing,  
February 27, 2025

Dear Chairman Burnes and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Terrence Wilson, J.D. I am Regional Policy and Community Engagement Director at IDRA, an independent, non-partisan non-profit committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

I write to urge you to **oppose Senate Bill 120** as it will make Georgia's school environments worse for all students and represents a potential threat to vital resources needed to make Georgia's schools the best in the nation.

Georgian students deserve access to the best educational environments to support their educational pursuits. Research has consistently shown that racial diversity in schools produces myriad short-term, long-term, academic and nonacademic benefits for our young people (Bardach, 2024). Increased diversity in schools produces better academic outcomes, including higher levels of academic achievement, higher graduation rates, and lower dropout rates. Students also develop improved communication and critical thinking skills and better develop the ability to relate with one another and increase connection to their schools (Tropp & Saxena, 2018).

Furthermore, diversity efforts are vital given the history of segregation in Georgia and the difficulties that Georgia's schools have had in fulfilling the promise of integration articulated over 70 years ago in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Unfortunately, Georgia still finds itself in the top 10 states in the nation for the most segregated schools (Orfield & Jarvie, 2020).

Beyond simply the racial composition of schools, Black students, Latino students, and other students of color have a particular experience that is impacted by their race. These students experience racial disparities in academic outcomes, discipline, advanced coursework participation and graduation. It is your job as education leaders to reverse these trends. Removing the ability for our schools to take proactive measures to address these challenges takes away a vital tool that schools need to achieve their mission of producing the best and brightest students in the nation.

Equity and inclusion efforts take the challenges presented by different populations and respond with specific interventions that will have the most impact on the students who are experiencing

disparity. These efforts are not fringe activities. They represent actions aimed at ensuring that students with unique challenges receive the resources that they need to thrive.

Efforts aimed at equity and inclusion are some of the most effective ways for schools, colleges, and universities to remediate the educational challenges created by years of historical marginalization and systemic lack of investment.

Finally, taking away both state and federal funding for schools attempting this important work will not make Georgian schools better. In fact, it will be incredibly harmful for all of Georgia's student population.

Georgia's K-12 schools have been systematically underfunded for years and currently operate under an antiquated funding formula. Removing funding from schools for efforts to make them better would further exacerbate this reality. In summary, while being against diversity, equity and inclusion may sound like a good talking point, that approach will only lead to worse schools and more negative experiences for Georgia's students.

## Recommendations

We encourage the committee to reject the approach presented by SB 120 and instead increase support for efforts aimed at creating culturally-sustaining school environments for all students. These efforts include, but are not limited to:

- Preventing identity-based bullying and harassment,
- Ensuring access to diverse and inclusive curricula,
- Repealing legislation attempting to censor classrooms, and
- Providing incentives for culturally-sustaining educational practices.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact Terrence Wilson, J.D., IDRA Regional Policy and Community Engagement Director, at [terrence.wilson@idra.org](mailto:terrence.wilson@idra.org).

## Resources

- Bardach, L., Röhl, S., Oczlon, S., Schumacher, A., Lüftenegger, M., Lavelle-Hill, R., Schwarzenthal, M., & Zitzmann, S. (December 2024). Cultural Diversity Climate in School: A Meta-Analytic Review of Its Relationships with Intergroup, Academic, and Socioemotional Outcomes. *Psychological Bulletin*, 150(12), 1397. DOI: 10.1037/bul0000454
- Mickelson, R.A., Bottia, M.C., & Lambert, R. (March 2013). Effects of School Racial Composition on K12 Mathematics Outcomes: A Metaregression Analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 83, 121-158. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543124753>
- Mickelson, R.A., Bottia, M.C., & Larimore, S. (2020). A Metaregression Analysis of the Effects of School Racial and Ethnic Composition on K-12 Reading, Language Arts, and English Outcomes. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649220942265>
- Orfield, G., & Jarvie, D. (December 2020). Black Segregation Matters – School Resegregation and Black Educational Opportunity. UCLA Civil Right Project, 2, 40. <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/black-segregation-matters-school-resegregation-and-black-educational-opportunity/BLACK-SEGREGATION-MATTERS-final-121820.pdf>
- Tropp, L.R., & Saxena, S. (May 2018). Re-Weaving the Social Fabric through Integrated Schools: How Intergroup Contact Prepares Youth to Thrive in a Multiracial Society. NCSD Research Brief No. 13. National Coalition on School Diversity. <https://www.prrac.org/re-weaving-the-social-fabric-through-integrated-schools-how-intergroup-contact-prepares-youth-to-thrive-in-a-multiracial-society/>

*IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.*

