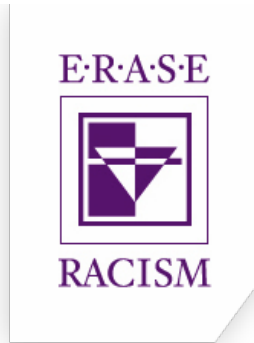


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ERASE Racism Applauds NYS For
Proposed Ban on DEI Programs**

Syosset, NY – April 28, 2025 – following statement applauding Letitia James for joining a federal government over its efforts to ban diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs in public schools. The statement, issued by ERASE Racism Acting President April Francis Taylor, reads as follows:



Suing US Government Over

ERASE Racism issued today the New York State Attorney General coalition of states in suing the

Nineteen states, including New York, filed a federal lawsuit on Friday, April 25, challenging the federal government’s attempt to withhold federal funding of schools that have diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs. New York demonstrated true leadership in joining the lawsuit, and New York State Attorney General Letitia James deserves the highest praise for standing up for DEI programs and refuting the erroneous idea that they are somehow discriminatory and illegal.

President Trump issued an Executive Order on January 21 in which he termed DEI policies “illegal” and called on all executive agencies to end such policies. The lawsuit, however, focuses on a subsequent document issued by the US Department of Education (ED) on April 3 stating that to continue receiving essential federal funding, states must affirm that they will not engage in undefined “illegal” diversity, equity, and inclusion practices.

That document rightly states that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provides that “[n]o person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” It then incorrectly claims that DEI programs violate Title VI, stating that “any violation of Title VI—including the use of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (“DEI”) programs to advantage one’s race over another—is impermissible.”

The core reasoning of the federal government in this instance is false. DEI programs do not “advantage one’s race over another.” They also do not exclude anyone from participation or from the resulting benefits.

ERASE Racism has long conducted DEI programs for public institutions, including schools and universities, and for private companies. The programs welcome everyone and benefit everyone. Their purpose is to help people of all races and backgrounds

understand the experiences of others and, in doing so, become more welcoming and collaborative.

In joining the lawsuit, Attorney General James said, “The Trump administration is illegally trying to stop efforts that prevent discrimination in our schools, support students with disabilities, and provide resources for students in need while jeopardizing billions of dollars in essential federal education funding. As a proud graduate of New York public schools, I will always step up to protect our schools and stop illegal attacks on our most vulnerable students.”

The lawsuit argues that the federal government ignored rules requiring public notice and a comment period. It also points out that the US Department of Education’s own charter bars it from “exercising any direction, supervision, or control over curriculum.”

The extent of funding in jeopardy is enormous. According to Attorney General James, “In New York, ED provides more than \$3 billion in funding to the New York State Education Department (NYSED). For example, NYSED will distribute nearly \$1.4 billion in federal Title I funds this fiscal year to school districts to help ensure low-income students have the resources needed to overcome barriers to learning and success. New York also receives nearly \$1 billion in funding appropriated by Congress under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.”

Like Attorney General James, I am also a product of New York public schools – in my case on Long Island. I have benefited personally from the federal support that is vital to public education in New York. I have also long advocated for and conducted DEI programs in New York public schools. They are both essential to providing students of all races and economic circumstances with the education that they need and deserve. Now I watch in dismay as the current federal administration moves to both dismantle the US Department of Education and, even so, use it as a vehicle to undo vital DEI initiatives.

The true pride of any great country lies in ensuring that the next generation is strong, well-equipped, and innovative. Yet, these actions by the federal government on education send the opposite message. Education has long been a cornerstone of the so-called "American Dream"—the promise that anyone, regardless of status, can build a better future. If we strip away that foundation, and crucial supports like DEI programs, what will be left for future generations to dream about?

To speak with April Francis Taylor, contact Henry Miller – hmiller@highimpactpartnering.com or 917-921-8034.

ERASE Racism is a New York-based civil rights organization that exposes and addresses the devastating impact of historical and ongoing structural racism, particularly in public school education and housing. It does so through research, policy advocacy, legal action, and educating and mobilizing the public – driving policy change at local, regional and statewide

levels and through national coalitions. It has been recognized locally and nationally for its cutting-edge work.