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ERASE Racism Issues Research Report on Inequity in New York’s Public Schools

Analyzing a Decade of Data, the Report Busts Longstanding Myths About School Segregation

Syosset, NY – April 24, 2023 – ERASE Racism issued today a research report titled “Empire State Inequity: A decade of school funding disparity and its effects.” The report tracks school district-level racial disparities across New York from 2011 to 2021 (the latest data available) and presents its findings with interactive data visualizations to encourage readers to dig deeply into the data provided. The report’s findings include the following:

- Differences in expenditures across the state are highly correlated with student performance. When differences in regional cost of living and student need are taken into consideration, there is a direct correlation between per-pupil expenditures and the percentage of students who are proficient in 3rd-grade English.
- School districts with the highest percentages of students of color have historically had the lowest per-pupil expenditures. Furthermore, throughout the past 10 years, their average expenditures have been declining at a faster rate than other school districts.
- Even though New York State is racially diverse, 1 out of 3 students of color attends a school district that is intensely segregated (90-100% students of color) and lacks essential resources. New York’s intensely segregated students of color (IS-SOC) districts have the lowest taxable property values and the lowest local revenue; yet they have the highest tax rates and tax burden.
- Supplemental state and federal funding have done little to alleviate the cost burden experienced by IS-SOC districts. When differences in regional cost of living and student need are considered, supplemental state and federal funding have disproportionately

benefited districts that are 91-100% white while doing little to close the revenue gap for districts with the highest proportions of students of color and need.

- The counties in New York with IS-SOC districts are Nassau (7), Kings (Brooklyn) (6), The Bronx (6), Westchester (5), Suffolk (4), New York (Manhattan) (3), Queens (2), Dutchess (1), Monroe (1), and Rockland (1).

The Myths That These Findings Dispel

School segregation has persisted in New York in part because of racially fueled myths that this report's findings dispel. Those now-disproven myths include the following:

- The idea that the underfunding of school districts predominantly comprised of students of color results from residents not paying enough in taxes is shown to be untrue. This report updates previous research (Fiscal Policy Institute, 2008) to demonstrate that New York's communities of color have long had the greatest school tax burden.
- The idea that white children have higher academic performance in school because their parents value education more than parents of color is disproven. IS-SOC districts have the highest tax rates, which shows the importance that residents of color place on providing their children with quality education.
- The idea that the under-performance of students in IS-SOC districts is due to the students' capacity is also disproven. This study shows that school expenditures are a deciding factor in student performance. Additionally, districts that are 91-100% white (indicated as 0-9% students of color in this report) are not the highest-performing districts in the state, making race a poor determinant of success.

"It's important that these racially fueled myths have been refuted," said ERASE Racism President Laura Harding. "What this research shows is that, given the right resources, all students can succeed. That is great news for all students in New York. These research findings should now inform public policy toward school funding in New York – at state and local levels – and also at the federal level."

The interactive report and a PDF of it are available at <https://www.eraseracismny.org/2023-school-funding-report>. To speak with ERASE Racism President Laura Harding, contact Henry Miller – 917-921-8034 or hmiller@highimpactpartnering.com. More information on ERASE Racism is available at www.eraseracismny.org.

ERASE Racism is a civil rights organization based on New York's Long Island 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.