

Adams, Democrats Reintroduce Teacher Diversity and Retention Act



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The bill would strengthen and diversify the teaching profession by authorizing two grant programs to invest in educator recruitment and training

Washington, D.C. (February, 26 2021) – This week, **Congresswoman Alma S. Adams, Ph.D. (NC-12)**, reintroduced the ***Teacher Diversity and Retention Act***, which will invest in and diversify the country's teacher workforce. As an original cosponsor of the bill, she is joined by **Reps. Ruben Gallego (AZ-07), Jahana Hayes (CT-05), and Chrissy Houlahan (PA-06)**.

This bill would authorize two grant programs to fortify teacher recruitment and training programs. The first would provide an infusion of funds for teacher training programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). The second would expand teacher preparation programs that provide dual certification in special education, social and emotional learning competencies, and behavior management so that teaching candidates are better prepared to meet the needs of all students.

"While Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) make up only 3 percent of the nation's colleges and universities, they produce nearly half of the country's Black teachers. That alone should demonstrate how important it is to strengthen the teacher pipeline at HBCUs and Minority Serving Institutions," **said Rep. Adams**. "The Teacher Diversity and Retention Act continues to build upon that teacher pipeline so that the next generation of educators reflects the diversity of our nation's student body."

Studies show clear evidence that a diverse teacher workforce improves student achievement, especially for students of color. However, even though a majority of American K-12 students are non-white, only 20% of the teacher workforce identify as

people of color. MSIs are disproportionately responsible for training these diverse teachers – HSIs train 90% of Latino teachers and HBCUs 50% of Black teachers – so investment in MSI teacher training programs is key to developing teaching talent that reflects the diversity of America's student population. Strengthening the diverse teacher pipeline would also help combat the nationwide teacher shortage, which significantly worsened last year when half a million teaching jobs were lost in part due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

"At a time of reckoning around racial justice and an ever-worsening teacher shortage crisis, it is more important than ever to make sure that we are investing in building a strong pipeline of qualified, diverse teachers. The Teacher Diversity and Retention Act does exactly that," **said Rep. Ruben Gallego**. "When teachers reflect the communities they serve and have the training and tools they need to succeed, everyone benefits. I am proud to reintroduce this bill during Black History Month in recognition of the importance of equitable education and representation in the teaching workforce in the fight for racial equality."

"The tragic events of this summer served as a painful but necessary reminder: America has a long way to go to fully realize its promise of equality to all, regardless of one's skin color," **said Rep. Houlahan**. "It is crucial that we legislate in a deliberate and anti-racist manner to help eliminate the systemic inequalities that have plagued our country since its founding. Our Teacher Diversity and Retention Act is an important step towards our collective goal of building an education system that makes quality education accessible to all. Before coming to Congress, I taught Chemistry to a group of high school students in North Philadelphia. It was an incredible experience, but I was dismayed to see so little diversity amongst my teaching colleagues. It's critical for students to be able to look up to their teachers and see themselves and their likeness reflected. You can't be what you can't see. Having more teachers of color betters our schools, our students and our communities. That's why I'm helping lead the charge with this crucial and prescient legislation. We need our school leaders to reflect the richly diverse country we are all lucky to call home."

"During a time of unprecedented learning loss throughout COVID-19, it is essential that schools have all the tools necessary to reach students. Looming layoffs from strained municipal budgets threaten to further exacerbate existing teacher shortages,

challenge efforts to attract and retain a diverse teaching force, and compound the generational consequences of this crisis," **said Congresswoman Hayes.** "Teachers of color help to close achievement gaps for students of color. The bill we are introducing will help to fortify the pipeline to strengthen and diversify the educator workforce, helping to ensure that teachers reflect the communities and students they serve."

"The teaching profession serves as a gateway to all other professions, and the path through which a literate democracy must tread," said **Lezli Baskerville, President & CEO of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO).** "Yet, America continues to experience critical teacher shortages and a gross lack of diversity in the teacher corps, despite general acceptance that there is a direct correlation between teacher diversity, rigor, expectations of students, and student outcomes. HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs are the answer to the national faculty excellence, numbers, and diversity challenges. The ***Teacher Diversity and Retention Act***, introduced by **Rep. Alma Adams (NC-12)**, the **Founder and Co-Chair of the Congressional Bipartisan HBCU Caucus**, Reps. Jahana Hayes (CT-05), Chrissy Houlahan (PA-06), and Ruben Gallego (AZ-07), will create a significant opportunity for NAFEO member institutions, HBCUs and PBIs, to accelerate their leadership roles in testing and making available to others best practices in teacher education, especially for students of color – the growing populations of the country – and the majority of students in American public schools. This legislation is especially needed at this time when coronavirus-related health and safety challenges caused education professionals to develop, master, and utilize technology-driven, hybrid teaching modalities, at warp speed, while maintaining integrity of discipline scholarship, and ensuring the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of content and delivery, that will equip students to thrive in a peaceful, interdependent, sustainable, pluralistic and just world."

"The largest demographic mismatch exists between Latino students and teachers—more than a quarter of students are Latino, compared to only 9% of teachers. Research shows that students' performance—including test scores, attendance, and college-going rates—can be positively impacted by a more diverse teacher workforce. It is vital that our children have role models and leaders in their lives and classrooms who reflect their racial, cultural, and linguistic background from an early age, boosting their

opportunity for success," said **Amalia Chamorro, Director of Education Policy for UnidosUS.** "Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) prepare a large share of the nation's Latinx teacher candidates, enrolling 39% of Latinx teacher candidates in 2016-17. This bill would help build the pipeline of Latino teachers by targeting resources and implementing successful strategies at MSIs – institutions that play a key role in closing the teacher to student racial/ethnicity gap."

"As a native Californian, I remember fondly the investments that the late Congressman Augustus Hawkins made on our education system," said **Dr. Michael L. Lomax, president and CEO of UNCF (United Negro College Fund).** "UNCF commends Congresswoman Adams and others for submitting the Teacher Diversity and Retention Act, and we call on the 117th Congress to pass this measure as soon as possible. Increasing the number of minorities, and specifically Black American teachers is vital. It is equally important to retain teachers in the classroom through incentives and support, such as forgiving the student debt they amass for the public good they are providing our communities. I look forward to working with legislators to get this bill to the finish line."

The ***Teacher Diversity and Retention Act*** is also endorsed by the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), and Stand for Children.

Congresswoman Alma Adams represents North Carolina's 12th Congressional District (Charlotte, Mecklenburg County). She serves on the House Committee on Education and Labor, the House Agriculture Committee, and the House Financial Services Committee in the 117th Congress.

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