

Chair Lewis, Chair Garlick, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon in support of the Educator Diversity Act, and other bills on the agenda that seek to ensure better recruitment and retention of educators of color. My name is Genesis Carela, and I am the Massachusetts Policy Associate at The Education Trust. We are a national education research, policy, and advocacy organization committed to improving the quality of public education and closing troubling gaps in opportunity and achievement. Here in Massachusetts, we lead and convene the Massachusetts Education Equity Partnership (MEEP), a statewide movement of more than 50 civil rights, social justice, and education policy organizations that work to advance educational justice and equity for systemically underserved students in the Commonwealth.

As an equity-driven organization, we lean on research which has clearly shown that having a racially and culturally diverse teacher workforce benefits all students — particularly students of color. Yet as you have heard today, the makeup of our state's educator workforce falls far short of representing the rich diversity of its students. According to a [recent analysis by The Education Trust](#), during the 2019-2020 school year, nearly 40% of Massachusetts schools had no teachers of color. And the representation gap is particularly glaring for the Latine population, who at the time represented 22% of the Commonwealth's students but only 3.3% of teachers.

When advocating for teachers of color, I often reflect on my own experience. Throughout my K-12 schooling, I only had three teachers of color, and it wasn't until sixth grade that I encountered my first. When other teachers saw an uninterested, disengaged student – she recognized that I needed more advanced coursework. She challenged me in ways I had never been challenged before and encouraged me to think critically and never underestimate myself. But it wasn't only about what she did for me and how she made me feel; I saw the contributions she made to the entire school community. She advocated for conversations and programming beyond just Black History Month, and connected lessons to current events, even developing a unit around President Obama's Inauguration where we watched it live because she knew how important it was for us to see the possibility of someone that looked like us shattering glass ceilings.

Every student in Massachusetts deserves an experience like mine. That's why we support this bill which will implement important strategies to help increase the recruitment of more educators of color.

But recruiting more teachers of color only gets them in the door; **retention** is still a large issue, and these recruitment efforts will be undermined if the Commonwealth doesn't also address existing barriers to retaining more educators of color. Therefore, we urge the committee to also support efforts to protect diverse educators in seniority-based layoffs and other policies that could undo the progress that is being made to diversify the educator workforce.

Massachusetts has a long way to go to provide every student – especially students from families and communities who have been systemically underserved – with the quality education

they need and deserve. Passing this bill will ensure we are well on our way to experiencing the far-reaching benefits of a diverse teacher workforce.