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**Interim President & CEO**  
Wade Henderson

March 1, 2021

Dear Senator,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the 109 organizations listed below, we urge you to support the confirmation of Miguel Cardona to be the next U.S. Secretary of Education. All students and caregivers in this country want the best education, support and dignity for themselves and their own children. We join with them, and our coalition welcomes the opportunity to support a nominee who has a demonstrated record as an impactful educator and who has expressed a commitment to upholding the civil rights of all students in America and advancing equity at the U.S. Department of Education.

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights is a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 220 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States. Equal access to education has long been a cornerstone of the civil rights movement. The Secretary of Education's role as an enforcer of education and civil rights laws<sup>1</sup> is central to advancing our shared vision of an inclusive and diverse system of high-quality public education that enables every student to live up to their potential.

Dr. Cardona's experience as a classroom teacher, principal, assistant superintendent, and commissioner in Connecticut have provided him important experience for this role and illustrates his familiarity with the contours of the education system. Furthermore, Dr. Cardona's lived experience as a low-income, English learner in Connecticut's public school system equips him with a critical perspective on the experience of some of our most marginalized students.<sup>2</sup> In his hearing before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee on February 3, 2021, Dr. Cardona expressed his commitment to protecting the civil rights of all students. Dr. Cardona's personal and professional experiences demonstrate that he is capable of and committed to enforcing the law in the service of students and equal opportunity — as is required of the Department of Education's chief executive.

The COVID-19 public health crisis and a long overdue reckoning with white supremacy and systemic racism have laid bare the significant barriers facing students and families based on race, ethnicity, household income, first language, disability, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity, and pregnancy/parenting status), immigration status, or other aspects of their background or identity. Long term closures of early childhood settings, K-12

<sup>1</sup> Department of Education Organization Act (Public Law 96-88)

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://ctmirror.org/2021/01/19/miguel-cardonas-ideas-about-education-were-forged-in-meriden-ct-now-he-will-bring-them-to-washington-d-c/>

schools, and college campuses, necessary to protect the safety and health of communities, have significantly exacerbated longstanding inequities in our educational system. Inequities in school resources and the criminalization of children that preceded the recent crisis require urgent action by a Secretary of Education committed to advancing equity in every action taken across the Department. Dr. Cardona has been a fierce advocate for some of the most marginalized students in Connecticut — including students of color, students with disabilities, low-income students, and English learners — and we expect he will continue do so as Secretary of Education.

The U.S. Department of Education is responsible for implementing and enforcing laws protecting students from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity, and expectant/parenting status) and disability and those laws that provide for educational opportunity from early childhood through graduate school. The person responsible for leading that department must be committed to enforcing federal laws on behalf of every single student in this country. Our nation's Constitution, economy, future and children deserve no less. As such, we urge you to support the confirmation of Dr. Miguel Cardona to be the next U.S. Secretary of Education. If you have any questions, please contact Arielle Atherley, policy analyst, at [atherley@civilrights.org](mailto:atherley@civilrights.org).

Sincerely,

**National Organizations:**

AFL-CIO  
Alliance for Excellent Education  
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)  
American Federation of Teachers  
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)  
ASPIRA  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities  
Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Black Administrators in Child Welfare  
CABE--California Association for Bilingual Education  
Center for Applied Linguistics  
Center for Disability Rights  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues  
Committee for Children  
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund  
Family Equality  
Feminist Majority Foundation  
GLSEN  
GreenLatinos  
Hindu American Foundation  
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities  
Hispanic Federation  
Human Rights Campaign  
IDRA (Intercultural Development Research Association)  
Internationals Network for Public Schools  
Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL-NCLIS)  
KIPP  
Lambda Legal  
LatinoJustice PRLDEF  
Lawyers for Good Government (L4GG)  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)  
Learning Heroes  
LULAC-IL  
MANA, A National Latina Organization  
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)  
NALEO Educational Fund  
National Action Network  
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)  
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives  
National Association of Human Rights Workers  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools  
National Coalition of Native American Language Schools and Programs  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Education Association  
National Hispanic Media Coalition  
National Immigration Law Center (NILC)  
National Latinx Psychological Association  
National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association  
National Organization for Women  
National Urban League  
National Women's Law Center  
National Youth Employment Coalition  
New Leaders

PFLAG National  
PolicyLink  
Poverty & Race Research Action Council  
Public Justice  
SER-National  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)  
Speak Up Special Education Advocacy  
SPLC Action Fund  
StriveTogether  
Teach For America  
The Advocacy Institute  
The Daniel Initiative  
The National Association for Bilingual Education  
The Opportunity Network  
TNTP  
UnidosUS  
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute  
Voto Latino  
YWCA USA

**State & Local Organizations:**

AAUW of Georgia  
Alianza  
ALL In Education  
Amachi Pittsburgh  
Center for Pan Asian Community Services, Inc.  
Coalicion de Lideres Latinos-CLILA  
Down Syndrome Association of Connecticut  
Educators for Excellence-Los Angeles  
Familias Presentes Movement  
Harlem Children's Zone  
Latino U College Access  
Los Angeles LGBT Center  
Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities at Kennedy Krieger Institute  
Michigan Alliance for Special Education  
Muncie Human Rights Commission  
New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE)  
Nollie Jenkins Family Center, Inc.  
North Carolina Justice Center  
R.E.A.C.H.  
Tennessee State Conference NAACP



Texas Border Coalition  
Urban League of Greater Atlanta  
Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh  
Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations  
Voces Unidas por la Educación  
Western CT Association for Human Rights, WeCAHR