

Good evening. My name is Kelly Klinefelter, and I am the chair of the Howard Progressive Project. I am here to support the task force's education recommendations.

Horace Mann, the father of American public education, envisioned schools that would prepare every child in our nation for citizenship. Calling them "the great equalizers of all men," Mann saw schools as the force in the United States of America that would grant an equal shot at freedom and prosperity to all people.

Folks move to Howard county for schools that they believe will give their children the best preparation for participation in our economy and our civic life. By some measures, our schools do a great job.

But we must have the moral courage to confront the reality that many of our Black and brown students do not experience our schools in same way their white peers do.

Black and brown students suffer disproportionate disciplinary actions, referrals, suspensions, expulsions, and arrests, often for developmentally-appropriate behaviors.

Black and brown students have lower high school graduation rates, with 4 times as many Black students as Asian students not reaching graduation and 4 times as many Hispanic students as White students not reaching graduation.

Clearly, our schools are not places that nurture all our students equally. And this is unacceptable for our economy, our democracy, and our public conscience.

We are grateful to the Racial Equity Task Force for calling on HCPSS to implement the following:

- First, we must acknowledge that educators are not immune from racism and cultural bias. I am a white educator of predominantly Black and brown children; I have to check myself and continue my learning constantly, and I'm fortunate to work in a school that requires this learning. Our HCPSS staff must be required to continue their own learning, as well, to be fully prepared for the privilege of teaching every student who enters their classrooms. Accordingly, we join in calling for cultural sensitivity and responsiveness training along with accountability systems for swift implementation in all schools.
- Second, the National Bureau of Economic Research demonstrated that when a Black child has a Black teacher in elementary school, their chance of not attaining a diploma reduces by 29 percent. Additionally, as Professor Gloria Ladson-Billings from the University of Wisconsin points out, having Black

teachers is important for white students, as well, as Black teachers serve as critical models of Black leadership, scholarship, and excellence in a nation that often fails to recognize that. Howard Progressive Project joins in calling for the diversification of the HCPSS faculty and staff in a timely and intentional manner.

- Finally, we must welcome every child into schools where they can hear and share their own histories. We join your call to diversify the curriculum.

To have the best Howard County, we need to provide the best education to all our children, not just some. And there is no zero sum in education. A better education for our Black and brown students is a better education — and better community — for all.