

New Jersey Consortium for Immigrant Children Applauds Newark Board of Education's Commitment to Address Inequities English Learners Face in Their District

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Newark, New Jersey, January 28, 2022 – The New Jersey Consortium for Immigrant Children (NJCIC), NJ Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages/NJ Bilingual Educators (NJTESOL/NJBE), and Education Law Center (ELC) recognize Newark Board of Education members for the approval of the *English Learners Resolution* at their January 27, 2022 public meeting. The resolution affirms the rights of English Learners who, based on district data, are 18.5% of the total school population.

A report released in November 2021 by NJCIC, NJTESOL/NJBE, and ELC highlighted the inequities English Learners face in New Jersey public schools. The report, [English Learners in New Jersey: Exposing Inequities and Expanding Opportunities in the Wake of the Pandemic](#), found that many school districts are failing to meet the standards of the New Jersey Bilingual Education Code or comply with federal law. The report also provided a Model Resolution on the Rights of English Learners.

“Acknowledging the issues highlighted and affirming the rights of English Learners in the district is a great first step,” said Lady Jimenez Torres, Policy Director for NJCIC. “I encourage the Newark Board of Education and its leadership to continue to advocate after the enactment of this resolution. It’s

important to ensure the district and its administration take the necessary steps to realize the commitments this resolution made.”

“We are encouraged that Newark Board of Education unanimously approved a resolution affirming the rights of English learners and their parents or caregivers,” Kathleen Fernandez, Executive Director of NJTESOL/NJBE stated. “At a time when COVID-19 has worsened the existing racial, immigration status-related, and socioeconomic inequalities in New Jersey public schools, we need more districts to follow Newark’s lead and not only pass a resolution but then enact the very policies and practices that demonstrate their commitment to ensuring an equitable education for English learners.”

During the Newark Board of Education meeting, Vereliz Santana, Co-Vice President of the Board, reflected on her own experience as an English Learner in the first grade. During comments from the board members and prior to the vote taking place, she recounted, “I almost got left back in the 1st grade due to the trouble I had acquiring the English language. But when my teacher told my mother that, my mom did everything possible to ensure that I passed the class. It was hard enough for her as an individual that didn’t know the language herself, but I can’t imagine how difficult that would have been if we were in a pandemic. I doubt I’d even be here if that were the case.” She also noted the importance of affirming these rights. “The resolution is intended as a reaffirmation of the value of the great diversity that we have in our schools and the importance of equity, specifically with respect to our English Language Learners.”