



## ARLINGTON BRANCH NAACP #7047

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October 31, 2019

Ms. Cintia Johnson  
Interim Superintendent

Mr. Daniel Redding  
Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources

Arlington Public Schools  
Syphax Education Center  
2110 Washington Boulevard  
Arlington, VA 22204

Dear Cintia and Dan:

The need to eliminate the achievement or opportunity gap for Black and Latino children in Arlington Public Schools (APS) is a common APS staff and School Board refrain. Recent data indicates persistent and, in some areas, growing disparities between these children and their White counterparts. These ongoing disparities are one of the most pressing issues facing APS.

The Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer (DEIO) position has been identified as a critical component in the School Board's plan to address historic education inequities at all levels of APS. Given this, the DEIO position must be commensurate with the stated needs and professed values of our community. We are aware of your intention to move forward with the current search and hiring plan. We are sending this letter to formally express our concerns about the process, job description, and resources APS has employed in its fulfillment of this critical position. We believe the feedback and recommendations offered here can also inform the current selection process.

We are asking APS to take a more comprehensive approach in filling this position and request your consideration in the following areas as you move forward with current candidate selection efforts: (1) the hiring process, (2) the job description, and (3) the resources needed to fulfill the requirements of the position.

*The mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination. All Units have been designated as 501(c) (4) organizations, only the National Office is a 501(c)(3) organization. A 501 (c) (4) organization is a nonprofit corporation operated exclusively for the promotion of social justice.*

## Hiring Process

*When creating a new position, thoughtful processes lead to more meaningful outcomes.*

**Contract with a reputable search firm to fill the position.** The DEIO position is an executive position on the same level as the Assistant Superintendents. We understand that the School Board is using an executive search firm to fill the Superintendent vacancy as well as the open Assistant Superintendent vacancies. Like the other executive level positions currently being filled by APS, it would be appropriate to employ an executive search firm to fill the DEIO position as well. A professional search firm would significantly broaden the applicant pool and potentially yield a larger selection of highly qualified candidates with the unique competencies needed for this potentially transformative position.

**Leverage best practices from other school districts.** Learning from the experiences of other school districts will lead to a more strategic and clear vision for DEIO responsibilities and better define the desired outcomes from their work. Although diversity equity and inclusion positions are a relatively new concept for public school systems, they have been created and implemented in several local school districts and across the nation. In our immediate area, Fairfax County Public Schools has hired a Chief Equity Officer, Loudoun County Public Schools has hired a Director of Equity, and the City of Alexandria Public Schools has hired a Race and Social Equity Officer to develop equity and diversity programs within their school systems. Learning how they developed those positions and what they have learned about maximizing its effectiveness could prove invaluable as APS begins its search for a DEIO.

## Job Description

*Qualifications and work experience should align with the position's enormous responsibilities.*

**Increase and better specify the position's qualifications.** Given the position's tremendous responsibilities, specific mention of years of prior relevant experience is appropriate and necessary to recruit a candidate with the skills needed to create APS' equity and diversity program. Arlington's history of school segregation and the existing infrastructure of economic segregation make it critical that any DEIO candidate possess specific experience in building an equity and diversity program in a demographically similar school district.

**Restructure responsibilities to better align with the equity needs of Black and Latino children.** As the job description currently reads, the DEIO's responsibilities are overbroad, all-inclusive and unspecific. The catalyst for this position was a specific need to eliminate decades of opportunity,

resource, academic, and discipline gaps between Black and Latino students and their White counterparts. The job description should reflect this specificity. Generalizing this position overlooks the historic and demonstrated negative outcomes experienced by Black and Latino children, as well as other minority populations in APS.

## **Resources and Authority**

*To be effective, the DEIO must have the needed resources and authority to conduct this important work.*

### **Identify and include the specifics of how staff and resources will be allocated for this position.**

The DEIO will be responsible for addressing issues of diversity, equity and inclusion within staff hiring, training, initiative development, coordination and implementation. In addition, APS has specified responsibilities in program evaluation and accountability mechanisms district-wide. Any one of these responsibilities constitutes a significant resource outlay and cannot realistically be accomplished by a single person. Placing this level of responsibility within a single position requires the support of skilled staff.

Without clearly identified adequate staff and support, the DEIO is destined to fall short of expectations and fail to address the needs of APS minority students. Relying on the Office of Excellence and Equity (OEE) to serve as the DEIO's staff is inadequate. Specific skill requirements, such as initiative development, and program evaluation and assessment will not necessarily match the skill set and capacity of the current OEE staff, which is already resource challenged. We recommend that staffing needs be considered during the current budget development process. This will ensure that APS is proactively identifying and allocating resources to prevent potential delays, rather than determining staffing needs after the DEIO is hired and the annual budget is already established.

**Include the specific level of authority the DEIO will have to carry out the required duties and responsibilities.** The DEIO's listed responsibilities do not indicate the authority the person will have to successfully perform them. The position description should provide potential candidates with a clear understanding of the authority they have to effectively carry out their responsibilities and whether there are accountability structures in place to ensure that adequate progress is made in the initiatives undertaken in APS' equity and diversity program.

**Due to the concerns listed above, we recommend that APS delay the hiring process to allow more time to address outstanding issues and make necessary changes based on our recommendations.** The October 31, 2019 closing date should be extended to allow the School Board and Administrative Staff additional time to make needed adjustments. This should include changes to the job description, the needs of the position within the context of the identified job requirements, and the current resources allocated to meet those expectations.

While we appreciate APS' desire to find a candidate and fill this position quickly, a rushed hiring process for this critical position will not serve APS staff or students in the long run. Black and Latino children will be directly affected by the person hired as the DEIO, and we have a vested interest in ensuring that the best possible person is hired. To that end, we would like to partner with you and take a more active role in the hiring process for this position.

We appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Julius D. Spain, Sr.  
President,  
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Sincerely,

Adora Williams  
President,  
Black Parents of Arlington  
blackparentsofarlington@gmail.com

cc: Arlington County School Board  
Ms. Julia Burgos, Chief of Staff, Interim Superintendent