

# THE ALLIANCE

## TO RECLAIM OUR SCHOOLS

April 27, 2017

To: The Honorable Paul D. Ryan, Speaker of the House  
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader  
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader  
The Honorable Charles E. Schumer, Minority Leader  
Members of the U.S. House of Representatives  
Members of the U.S. Senate

We are parents, students, educators and advocates for public schools across the country. We strive each day to ensure that our schools are places where tolerance and democracy are taught along with reading and writing—places where children from all walks of life come together to learn, and where students and educators feel safe and supported.

Together, we represent 7 million Americans. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS) will be mobilizing our members, along with hundreds of thousands of others, to deliver a clear message to the nation, the Congress and the President: ***We will not be divided by hate and fear.***

Over the past 100 days, tens of thousands of U.S.-born children, DACA-mented individuals, immigrant children and families have lived with constant fear and insecurity caused by the President's targeting of Muslims, refugees and undocumented immigrants. His words, his initiatives and his policy proposals are eroding the trust built by educators, parents, law enforcement and communities over decades.

Today, and on May 1, we are asking Congress to stop the assault on our neighbors, our families, our students and our schools. We are calling on you to *build schools, not walls*.

This is personal. These are real people and this is real fear:

**A teacher in Milwaukee said that one of her second graders crawled in to her lap crying. He told her, “I am so scared that somebody is going to take my daddy away.”**

These are the words of a six year old child, crying and afraid in school.

**His teacher says, “You can’t teach like that. You can’t learn like that.”**

Yet classrooms are being impacted all across the country by stories like this. Our schools and communities are being permeated with fear.

Public schools are the cornerstone of our civic and economic infrastructure. Their work is already complicated enough. Yet schools in low-income communities, and in predominantly African American and immigrant neighborhoods have struggled for too long with a lack of resources. For decades, these schools have been asking for up-to-date technology and textbooks. Even on the most routine of days, we need more counselors, more social workers, more nurses. And now, on top of that, our schools are threatened with immigration raids and deportations. Teachers can’t teach like that. Students can’t learn like that. Parents can’t provide for families under these conditions.

Now, President Trump is proposing to build a 1,200 mile wall along the Mexican border—a boondoggle project that is unsupported by fact<sup>1</sup> and preposterous in its grandiosity. The Department of Homeland Security has projected that the wall would cost \$21.6 billion.<sup>2</sup> A new report released last week puts that figure at nearly \$70 billion.<sup>3</sup>

**We unequivocally condemn this wall, and we unwaveringly denounce the politics of fear and division that have swept over this nation in the last 100 days.**

Instead of separating families and building walls, we must invest in our schools as part of our nation's infrastructure. Stronger schools are schools where teachers have the tools they need to teach, students have access to a broad and rich curriculum, and where families and students are welcomed, supported, engaged and safe. Investing in our schools means making sure that every school—and every student—has access to this kind of learning environment. And it means lifting the cloud of fear that hangs over too many communities right now.

Nearly 100 school districts and over 200 institutions of higher education have passed resolutions declaring schools safe havens against ICE raids. These districts are standing up for their students. They are standing up for the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution, and for the legal right each child has to an education. We stand with them.

We will be marching and rallying on May 1. *Join us* in our cities and states, and then *lead us* to a stronger, safer, unified nation.

- **Reject the wall.** Period. The nation can't afford to spend billions of dollars on a wall. Say no to the wall.
- **Stop the deportations.** Tell ICE to stay out of our schools. End the separation of families. Protect DACA and DREAMers. Refuse to spend the \$6 billion requested to triple the number of ICE officers. Provide real leadership by introducing legislation to fix our broken immigration system.
- **Protect funding for public education.** The President has proposed slashing \$9 billion from the U.S. Department of Education and ending federal funding for after-care programs, community schools, teacher training and other critical supports.
- **Invest in public schools,** particularly those serving African American and Latino children. AROS is demanding 10,000 sustainable community schools across the country—schools that have the resources and wraparound supports that children need to succeed.
- **Say no to vouchers.** We oppose public funding of unaccountable private and religious schools. Programs that funnel taxpayer dollars to privately managed schools siphon much-needed resources from our public schools.

### **Build Schools, Not Walls.**

The under-signed organizations will be coming together with hundreds of others on May 1<sup>st</sup> to denounce the President's attack on immigrants. Our organizations will be calling on you – our elected representatives – to stop the deportations. Stop the wall, and instead invest in our classrooms.

Signed,

**Keron Blair, National Director, Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools**

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<sup>1</sup> "Border Wall Could Cost 3 Times Estimates, Senate Democrats' Report Says," New York Times, April 18, 2017.

Available at: [www.nytimes.com/2017/04/18/us/politics/senate-democrats-border-wall-cost-trump.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/18/us/politics/senate-democrats-border-wall-cost-trump.html)

<sup>2</sup> "Exclusive--Trump border "wall" to cost \$21.6 billion and take 3.5 years to build: internal report," Reuters, February 9, 2017. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-immigration-wall-exclusive-idUSKBN15O2ZN>

<sup>3</sup> NY Times, April 18, 2017.

**And the following organizations:**

482 Forward, Detroit  
Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors  
Action NC  
Action Now Institute (IL)  
AFT - Maryland  
AFT Connecticut  
AFT Local 212/Milwaukee Area Technical College  
AFT New Jersey  
AFT Pennsylvania  
Alliance for Education Justice  
Alliance for Quality Education, New York State  
Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)  
American Federation of Teachers  
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee  
AMOS  
Arab American Association of NY  
AROS Houston  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice  
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance AFL-CIO  
Baltimore Teachers Union  
Boston Education Justice Alliance  
Boston Teachers Union  
Bridging Cultures Group Inc., New York  
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council, Chicago  
CASA  
Center for Community Change  
Center for Popular Democracy  
Chicago Jobs with Justice  
Chicago Teachers Union  
Churches United for Fair Housing, New York City  
Cincinnati AFL-CIO Labor Council  
Cincinnati Black Lives Matter  
Cincinnati Federation of Teachers Retired  
Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center  
Cincinnati Education Justice Coalition  
Cincinnati Federation of Teachers  
Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center  
Citizen Action New York  
Communities United, Chicago  
Concerned Citizens Coalition, Paterson  
Democratic Socialists of America  
Dialogue on Diversity  
Education Law Center  
Education Rights Network  
Fair Immigration Reform Movement  
Faith Community Alliance  
Fannie Lou Hamer Center for Change, Euphora, MS  
First Focus Campaign for Children

For Our Future Fund  
FRESC - Good Jobs, Strong Communities  
Gamaliel  
Grassroots Education Movement (GEM), Chicago  
Greater NYC for Change  
Greater Santa Cruz Federation of Teachers 2030 CFT-AFT  
Harlem Renaissance Education Pipeline C2C  
Highlander Research and Education Center  
Hispanic Federation  
Illinois Federation of Teachers  
Immigrant Dignity Coalition  
In the Public Interest  
Jefferson Elementary Federation of Teachers, AFT 3267 (Daly City, CA)  
Journey for Justice Alliance  
Justice League CA  
Justice League NYC  
Kenwood Oakland Community Organization, Chicago  
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement  
Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)  
Logan Square Neighborhood Association, Chicago  
Los Angeles College Faculty Guild, AFT Local 1521  
Make the Road CT  
Make the Road NJ  
Make the Road PA  
MANA - A National Latina Organization  
Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance  
Massachusetts Jobs with Justice  
Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength (MOSES)  
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund  
MN Neighborhoods Organizing for Change  
Montclair Federation of Adjunct Faculty, Local 6025  
MPower Change, New York City  
Muslim Community Network, New York City  
National Association for Bilingual Education  
National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy  
National Education Association  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health  
National Nurses United  
Neshaminy Federation of Teachers, Local 1417, Pennsylvania  
New York Civil Liberties Union  
New York Communities for Change  
New York Families  
New York Immigration Coalition  
New York State United Teachers  
NoIDCNY  
Northern Kentucky Labor Council  
NYC Coalition for Educational Justice

One America  
One Pennsylvania  
Oregon Education Association  
Organize Florida and Organize Florida Education Fund  
Organizing in the Land of Enchantment, New Mexico  
Our Community, Our Schools, Dallas  
Parent Leadership Institute, New Jersey  
Parents Advocated for Children's Education, Paterson  
Partnership for Community Action - New Mexico  
Paterson Education Fund  
Philadelphia Federation of Teachers  
Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers Local 400  
Planned Parenthood of Cincinnati  
Professional Staff Congress/CUNY  
PULSE NJ  
Rochester Teachers Association  
Rutgers AAUP-AFT  
Sanctuary Rapid Response Team  
SEIU Local 1  
Service Employees International Union  
Socialist Alternative  
St. Paul Federation of Teachers  
Teaching for Change  
Texas AFT  
Texas New Era  
Texas Organizing Project  
The Black Institute, New York  
Toledo Federation of Teachers  
Tri-State Free Thinkers  
UFCW Local 75  
United for a New Economy  
United Parent Leaders Action Network (UPLAN)  
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute  
United Teachers of Los Angeles  
United University Professions, California  
United We Dream  
Urban Word NYC  
Urban Youth Collaborative, New York City  
Virginia Coalition for Immigrant Rights  
Voto Latino, Virginia  
Warren Simmons, Senior Fellow, AISR  
Washington State Parent Ambassadors  
Worker Defense Project, Texas  
Workers Center for Racial Justice-Chicago  
Youth On Board, Boston