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**Thousands of Parents, Students, Teachers, and Education Support Staff Across the US
Rally for Sustainable Community Schools**

*Broad Coalition of Community Groups and National Education Organizations Demand Full
Funding for Public Schools that Support Children and Communities*

Washington D.C. - This week, the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools—a broad coalition of, parents, students, teachers, community and faith-based groups, and labor unions —will be taking action in 15 cities across the country as part of a nationwide week of action to call for sustainable community schools. Following the midterm election gains by opponents of strong public schools, community members are coming together to demand that cities shut down the pipeline of public funding to unaccountable private charter schools and instead invest in public sustainable community schools that provide all students with equitable, affordable, and accessible education.

Thousands are expected to take part in rallies in Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and other major cities, where corporate education reform has resulted in massive cuts in public education funding and the rise of pop-up charter schools, mass school closures, and compromised curriculums because of high-stakes testing. As a concrete first step, AROS is calling on federal, state, and local education departments to use all new federal School Improvement Grants (SIG) to create sustainable community schools.

Kendra Brooks, a parent leader with the Philadelphia Coalition Advocating for Public Schools (PCAPS) and chair of the School Advisory Committee at Steel Elementary School feels the urgency that her Nicetown neighborhood needs a community school. “Community schools offer the opportunity for communities like mine to heal themselves from the inside out, using the tools and resources that parents and neighborhood partners identify as needed. This is what will dramatically improve the education our children are receiving. Parents and teachers in my school voted against turning it over to a charter organization. We don't think the District expected that. But we don't need an outside organization telling us what our children need.”

In each city, coalitions of community groups and labor unions will rally, hold walk-ins or sit-ins at schools, and call for full funding and administrative support for sustainable community schools. Sustainable community schools are neighborhood-based public schools that recognize the effects that poverty can have on students and address those consequences head on with a robust array of wraparound services and challenging curriculum so that students have a strong, high quality education, no matter their zip code or the color of their skin. Community groups in New York and Illinois are also releasing new reports exposing fraud and waste in the charter school industry.

"Parents and educators want great neighborhood public schools that enable all our children to thrive. That's a far better strategy than whittling each teacher and student down to a data point and shutting down schools by the dozens," said AFT President Randi Weingarten. "And that's what our agenda to reclaim the promise of public education is all about — solutions that work for kids, including community schools and broad, strong curriculum options like career and technical education, art and music. In places that have embraced this model, test scores, graduation rates and morale are all on the rise, neighborhoods are growing more stable, and public schools are right where they should be – at the center of the communities."

The Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS) is an unprecedented alliance of parent, youth, community, and labor organizations representing more than seven million people nationwide, fighting to reclaim the promise of public education as our nation's gateway to a strong democracy. AROS is calling for full and fair funding for sustainable community schools that provide quality "wraparound services," including health services, breakfast programs and afterschool care that counteract the impacts of poverty on students' academic experience and performance.

"We have a right to an education and we want restorative justice in our schools," said Keno Walker, a recent graduate from Miami Dade County public schools, from the [Alliance for Educational Justice and Power U Center for Social Change](#). "The only way that is going to happen is if we have community schools. They are an answer to ending the school-to-prison pipeline."

AROS advocates for strong sustainable community schools that include positive disciplinary practices to end the school-to-prison pipeline, engaging, rigorous, and culturally relevant curriculum, transformational parent and community engagement, more job training and support programs for teachers and fewer high-stakes tests, . The AROS platform includes quality and affordable early childhood education, and a living wage that lifts people and whole communities out of poverty.

Participating locations include: Austin, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Milwaukee, New York City, Newark, New Mexico, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

****For a full list of activities around the country please visit: www.reclaimourschools.org**

Additional Quotes:

"As a parent whose kids have gone to both district and charter schools, I'm proud to stand with UTLA and parents and community organizations to demand the schools our kids deserve. ALL our children deserve smaller classes, a discipline policy that helps kids, doesn't just push them out, and ethnic studies. Our kids and families and teachers deserve great, fully funded, public schools in every neighborhood."

-Martha Sanchez, ACCE. Parent at Orthopaedic Medical Magnet HS,

"Educators know that students need to come to school ready and able to learn. Students who have good nutrition, dental and medical services, and counseling programs where necessary are

simply going to do better in school. And all of our students, regardless of their zip code or color of their skin, deserve the resources and time needed to learn.”

-Lily Eskelsen Garcia, President of the National Education Association (NEA)

"When CPS [Chicago Public Schools] closed Overton Elementary, my grandchildren were snatched from a school where they were happy and well adjusted to an environment where all the babies know they are packed on top of each other like animals. Our scores have plummeted, children are fighting...This is not reform; it's sabotage of our children's education. So yes I want Sustainable Community Schools. I want a good neighborhood school for my grandchildren"

- Irene Johnson, a Chicago parent with the Kenwood Oakland Neighborhood Organization who serves as a Local School Council member at Mollison Elementary School

"Every child deserves access to a high-quality, community school in their neighborhood that includes a challenging curriculum, top-notch teachers and the wraparound services students need to be successful. Expanding opportunity for more students to attend 'full-service' community schools is a cornerstone to building economy that works for everyone."

-Mary Kay Henry, President of SEIU International

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