

These talking points are meant for use with either national or local media. There are three sections; the first two are for national media. We suggest that when you speak with local reporters, you say that we have local issues and a nationally coordinated campaign. We suggest that you begin with local talking points and then move to the national ones.

SHORTEST STATEMENT OF OUR MESSAGE:

We are here today to inclusively stand up for all our students. What we are doing here today at _____ is happening all across this country. We represent the fight for the soul of American public education. Together, we must stand up and say: Education justice is racial and social justice. Donald Trump's campaign and his actions as president-elect are deeply troubling. Trump's own words, and his nominations for Cabinet positions, suggest that his administration will target immigrants, the LGBTQ community, American Muslims, educators, working families and the labor movement, women and so many others.

We will protect our students, our schools and our communities!

TOP-LINE NATIONAL TALKING POINTS FOR JANUARY

1. OUR SCHOOLS AND CAMPUSES WILL BE SAFE SPACES FROM THE THREAT OF DEPORTATION, RACISM AND BULLYING:

When we strip away the labels of identity—of religion, birthplace, gender, race or sexual orientation—we all want the same things: to be able to provide for ourselves and our loved ones, to live without fear, and to ensure that our kids have access to high-quality public education. President-elect Donald Trump and his allies could make our schools unsafe and unwelcoming for our students and our community. That is why we are here today.

We will not let Donald Trump, Betsy DeVos and their billionaire friends destroy and pillage the bedrock of our democracy: public education.

2. WE WANT LONG-OVERDUE INVESTMENT IN THE SCHOOLS THAT SERVE BLACK AND BROWN COMMUNITIES. THIS IS THE BASIS OF EDUCATION JUSTICE, RACIAL JUSTICE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:

The Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS)—a coalition of 10 national community, labor and advocacy organizations—is coordinating a day of action in hundreds of cities, with thousands of participants, to make clear to President-elect Trump that we will fight back against any attempt to privatize or disinvest in public education.

Public schools, particularly those in black and brown communities, have never received the investments they need to ensure student success. Over the past 20 years, as the percentage of poor children in public schools has increased, investment has actually decreased. Our schools have been starved of needed resources—in experienced teachers, in technology, facilities, educational materials and more. Our students and teachers have been ranked and rated rather than given the tools they need to succeed. Now more than ever, we should be working on leveling the playing field for all students instead of making it harder to achieve the American dream. What's good for public school students in our affluent and white communities is good for students in our most disadvantaged districts as well. We want the schools all our students deserve.

3. WE URGE THE U.S. SENATE TO VOTE “NO” ON BETSY DeVOS:

When public schools are well-funded, they work well. Since 2000, Betsy DeVos and her family have advocated tirelessly for private school vouchers, charters and the dismantling of public school districts. They have given millions in campaign contributions to far-right politicians in exchange for votes on these issues. And their goal is simple: defund, destabilize and demonize public schools, while promoting private, for-profit schools without any transparency, accountability or respect for civil rights.

4. WE WANT MONEY FOR PUBLIC “SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS” AND AN END TO SIPHONING AWAY RESOURCES TO CHARTER SCHOOLS:

We know what works. There are successful, high-performing public schools across the country. Thousands of them are what we call “sustainable community schools.” These schools serve low-income students with additional resources and strong educational programs. We know they work. We want more of them rather than an expansion of charter schools that siphon money from public districts, resist accountability, and so often refuse to enroll, or push out, students with special needs, while performing on average no better, and often worse, than the underfunded public schools in our cities.

TALKING POINTS IN RESPONSE TO REPORTERS' QUESTIONS OR TO RAISE DURING LONGER CONVERSATIONS WITH NATIONAL AND LOCAL REPORTERS:

Who we are

➤ Today, teachers, parents, students and community members are taking action in cities and states across the country. We believe that taking action together will lead to positive change.

➤ This action is coordinated by the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS), a coalition of 10 national labor and community partners.

➤ For too long, schools in black and brown communities have been denied the funds needed to provide our children with expert and experienced teachers, a rich and challenging curriculum, small class sizes that permit more one-on-one learning, and the healthcare and social services they need to succeed.

Our demands

➤ We are taking action to show our concern for, and opposition to, the education agenda of Donald Trump and Betsy DeVos, his nominee for secretary of education.

➤ We want the president and secretary to focus on ensuring the long-overdue investment in public schools that serve black and brown children. We need educational justice.

➤ Too many black and brown children and communities do not have the resources they need to do well. Their schools must be able to provide them with the education that all our children deserve, an education that prepares them for a bright future.

On community schools

➤ Public “sustainable community schools” like the 5,000 operating now in cities around the country can provide the world-class education we want for our children. These schools demonstrate that when public schools are well-funded, they can work for all students and serve as anchors in their communities.

➤ Public “sustainable community schools” provide what our children need to succeed through:

- expansive, culturally relevant curriculums;
 - a focus on deep learning and critical thinking rather than on excessive, high-stakes testing;
 - restorative disciplinary practices rather than suspensions, expulsions and jail-like atmospheres;
 - counseling and healthcare services that support learning; and
 - an atmosphere that encourages parent and community involvement rather than state takeovers and other means of eliminating local control.
- We demand an end to treating black and brown children like criminals. Schools that impose rigid behavior codes on children—like silent lunch periods and humiliating punishments for minor infractions—are not educating students for a productive future. Schools that employ armed police officers are not safer schools. They are criminalizing children. We must instead invest in constructive and restorative approaches to discipline and school cultures, like those created by public “sustainable community schools” that are respectful and focused on learning

Donald Trump and Betsy DeVos

- We are concerned about what the Donald Trump has identified as his education agenda—including a federally funded voucher program that would devastate our public school districts. Vouchers and charter schools were never intended to equitably serve all children. We need policies that invest in our schools

➤ Much of the rhetoric coming from what will be the Trump administration includes coded racist and anti-immigrant language. We want that to change.

1.

➤ Betsy DeVos is the wrong choice for secretary of education. She lacks any actual experience in public education—except as an advocate for its demise. If she does to American public education what she did in Detroit, we are in big trouble.

Charter Schools

➤ As “schools of choice,” charter schools were never meant to serve all children—and they don’t. Charters select their students, push out those they don’t want, and too often rely on rigid behavior control rather than proven educational strategies. Yet, even with all that “choice,” most charter schools achieve no better academic results than our badly funded public schools. Let’s face it: Too many charter operators are using the schools to make money, or to destabilize public districts in an ideological fight over the whole idea of a publicly funded system of common schools.

➤ The expansion of the charter industry is not the way forward. More and more parents are finding that many charters do not deliver what they promise. The discipline practices are too harsh; teachers are untrained; the schools stifle democracy; and they focus too much on testing and not on creative learning.

Some charter schools do a good job, but many are run by incompetent or unscrupulous profit-seekers. Other charters spend vast sums on CEOs and external consultants who are paid many times the salary of a classroom teacher. Some charter CEOs make more than twice what big-city superintendents make.

Charter schools avoid and resist public accountability for the taxpayer money they receive. They claim to be public schools when they ask for money, but claim they are private corporations when they are asked to justify how they spend and the results they achieve with the public money they receive.

- Charters siphon money away from the public schools that serve black and brown children. On top of that, they routinely refuse to enroll students with special needs and push out students who encounter difficulties once enrolled.

On investment

- Our schools and communities have been starved of the resources we know they need—billions more than they currently receive.
- We can get that money from making the very wealthy and corporations pay their fair share. Wall Street billionaires continue to benefit from tax loopholes that rob our schools of much of the money they need. We have to close those loopholes and make sure much of the money gained goes to the most underfunded public schools.
- You can't buy good teachers, good school buildings and much-needed support services on the cheap. Our children and our country's future prosperity depend on making adequate and equitable funding of schools that serve black and brown children a top priority. The resources are there if the political will is also there.