



**PEER** | Partnership for Equity  
& Education Rights

# PEER is Working to Ensure that Every Community has Strong Public Schools

Far too many public schools throughout the US are under-resourced through antiquated funding formulas that reinforce inequities between high and low-wealth districts. Students are facing exceedingly disparate educational opportunities based on access to critical educational resources including special education, well-supported teaching staff, and quality curriculum.

## **The Partnership for Equity and Education Rights (PEER)**

is a state and territory-driven network of organizers, lawyers and community leaders fighting for education equity and an end to the ongoing divestment of public education. We believe strong public schools are essential to strong communities and work across the country to advocate for expanded educational opportunities for underrepresented children and young people. PEER prioritizes support for communities of color by partnering and contracting with organizations and businesses that are BIPOC-owned and led.

## What's at Stake

Decades of systemic injustice and underfunding are depriving students of color equal access to educational opportunity. In the U.S. today, school districts serving the largest populations of Black, Latinx, or Indigenous students receive roughly \$1,800 less per student in state and local funding than those serving the fewest students of color. For a school district with 5,000 students, this adds up to a shortage of \$9 million per year. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated barriers to quality education for students across the country and many states responded by paring back education funding, opting to reserve rainy day funds over investing them into schools that needed them most.



*We cannot afford to allow lawmakers to play politics with childrens' futures any longer.*

We cannot afford to allow lawmakers to play politics with childrens' futures any longer. We know what it takes to educate children. In fact, we do it every day in middle- and upper-income communities. PEER believes all schools and students, no matter their zip code, should have the same opportunities.

## Who We Are

PEER is a national network of state-and territory-focused coalitions and organizations currently based in AR, AZ, CO, FL, GA, IL, MD, MI, MS, NC, NE, NM, NH, OK, PA, TN, VA, WI and Puerto Rico. PEER was founded in 2016 when anti-poverty lawyers from across the U.S. convened with national partners to discuss how public policy can better address the lack of education opportunity for undervalued children.

PEER is the only national network that connects lawyers, advocates, students, and families around campaigns focused on reinvestment in public education. This unique model allows diverse partners to drive progress through shared knowledge, capacity building and collaborative strategies.

Our partners work on the ground to counter the harmful narrative of “failed public schools” and advance innovative state, territory, and local solutions for equity and education rights. By building power through community mobilization, speaking out against inadequate school funding, and leading campaigns for policy change, PEER partners are fighting for equitable education funding across the US. PEER is supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Resource Equity Funders Collaborative, and the Skyline Foundation.

## What We Believe

We believe that every child has the right to a sound, basic education regardless of their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, zip code, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Public education is an essential cornerstone of our society, and sufficient funding and other resources will help provide every child with the opportunity to achieve success. But today, too many schools are underfunded

and lack the policies and programs that create an environment where all children have an opportunity to learn. We know this work is essential. Too many children are deprived of a strong education because of systemic bias, uneven distribution of resources, and support for privatization of education.

We recognize the significant impact of racism on our society and schools. Racist and oppressive policies have played and continue to play a substantial role in shaping our education systems. Students of color and young people living in poverty are disproportionately impacted by disinvestment in public education, funding formulas that favor schools in middle- and upper-income communities and systems and policies that punish individuals instead of supporting students.

## What We Do

PEER works across state and territory lines to expand educational opportunities for underrepresented youth. We are combining the skills and leadership of advocates, lawyers, organizers and community leaders to build a national movement focused on investing in public schools and communities. Through strong grassroots mobilization, coalitions are creating opportunities for community members to take direct action and demand increased school funding and uplifting student voices that have long gone unheard.

PEER's network of coalitions bring together allies across urban, rural, and ideological backgrounds to work in tandem to bring diverse voices, perspectives and communities together, ensuring their voices are heard in policymaking. Coalitions are focused on increasing public understanding of who is responsible for education policy in their government, amplifying pro-equity legislation, and educating communities on candidate positions on public education funding. Our partners are driving equity agendas through advocacy and relationship-building with state and legislative leadership to champion bold policy to fully and fairly fund schools.

## Our Theory of Change

PEER's goal is to maximize impact beyond state, territory, and local settings by helping to share strategies, grassroots engagement, as well as model policies and law and policy expertise.



*We advance equity-based policies and fight against efforts to further dismantle public education.*

We advance equity-based policies and fight against efforts to further dismantle public education. By combining community and grassroots leadership with legal and public policy expertise, PEER strengthens efforts to ensure public schools are fully funded and all students have access to the resources and support they need to succeed.

We maximize impact by working across the country to address the disparities in public education funding. PEER provides a space to discuss education policies impacting states, territories, cities, communities and students. We share effective model policies, litigation and legal strategies and organizing tactics and identify the collective resources needed for effective campaigns. Network members have access to exclusive resources and materials to further their work.

## Our Policy Agenda

PEER supports full funding for public education, funding formulas that provide increased resources for underrepresented students and revenue solutions to address inadequate funding for schools in low-income communities. We oppose misguided cuts to public schools and the use of public funds to support private education.

Our work ultimately aims to increase public education funding and ensure that these funds are allocated according to student needs. With more equitable funding, schools will be able to provide more students with a learning environment that positions them to succeed, including modern facilities, use of technology and up to date learning materials and increased access to support staff, including counselors, social services, mental health and special education staff.

## PEER Partners





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Clear thinking for a stronger Nebraska



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