



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-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 state lines 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-focused legal, advocacy and grassroots community organizations currently based in 9 states: IL, NC, VA, MI, NM, MD, TN, PA and GA. 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 connects lawyers, advocates, students, and families around campaigns focused on reinvestment in public education. This model allows diverse partners to drive progress through shared knowledge, capacity building and collaborative strategies across states.

Our partners work on the ground to counter the harmful narrative of "failed public schools" and advance innovative state and local solutions for equity and education rights. By building power through community mobilization, speaking out against inadequate school funding, and leading statewide campaigns for policy change, PEER partners are fighting for equitable education funding across the US. PEER is convened by the Education Law Center and is supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Resource Equity Funders Collaborative, and the Yellow Chair 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 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 in their state and demand increased school funding and uplifting student voices that have long gone unheard.

PEER's state-level 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 state government, amplifying pro-equity legislation, and educating communities on candidate positions on public education funding. Our partners are driving equity agendas in their respective states 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 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 states to address the disparities in public education funding. PEER provides a space to discuss education policies impacting states, 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

Michigan **482Forward** is a citywide education organizing network in Detroit. We are neighborhood organizations, parents, and youth committed to ensuring that all Detroit children have access to an excellent education, regardless of their race or socioeconomic status. Together, we are building power to make systemic change and win educational justice for our communities.

Georgia **The Georgia Budget & Policy Institute** works to advance lasting solutions that expand economic opportunity and well-being for all Georgians. GBPI produces research and state budget analysis to show Georgia ways to provide equitable education, health care and opportunity for everyone.

Illinois **Raise Your Hand for Illinois Public Education** engages, informs, and empowers parents to protect and strengthen public education for all children in Chicago and Illinois, eliminate inequities in public schools, and work at the grassroots for the public good that is public education.

Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights was founded in 1969 as a group of civil rights lawyers and advocates working to secure racial equity and economic opportunity for all. Our vision is to root out and dismantle deeply entrenched systems of discrimination, racism, and economic oppression by using the power of the law to give voice to those most impacted by these civil rights issues.

Virginia **Legal Aid Justice Center** fights injustice in the lives of individual Virginians while rooting out exploitative policies and practices that keep people in poverty. LAJC uses impact litigation, community organizing, and policy advocacy to solve urgent problems in areas such as housing, education, civil rights, immigration, healthcare and consumer finance.

LAJC's primary service areas are Charlottesville, Northern Virginia, Richmond and Petersburg, but the effects of their work are felt statewide.



The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis advances racial and economic justice in Virginia by advocating for public policies that are designed in partnership with people most impacted, and shaped by credible, accessible fiscal and policy research.

New Mexico

New Mexico Center on Law & Poverty advances economic and social justice through education, advocacy, and litigation. An effective leader on a broad range of issues impacting children and families, such as healthcare, public benefits, education, and workers' rights, NMCLP offers representation before governmental agencies, through the legislative process, and in the courts, to protect the rights and improve the living conditions for low-income New Mexicans.

North Carolina

North Carolina Justice Center works to eliminate poverty in North Carolina by ensuring that every household can access the resources, services and treatment necessary for economic security. NCJC has advanced education equity through school funding and desegregation litigation and legislative advocacy. Rick Glazier, executive director, is a former state representative and House Education Committee chair.

The Education Justice Alliance is a group of concerned individuals in Wake County working for a reduction in the number of public-school students pushed off the academic track through unfair suspensions, harsh discipline policies, and academic failure. EJA is a non-partisan grassroots group that participates in civic engagement efforts.

Tennessee

The Education Trust in Tennessee advocates for equitable education for historically underserved students across the state. We believe in centering the voices of Tennessee students and families as we work alongside them for the future they deserve.

Pennsylvania

Urban League of Philadelphia is an affiliate of the National Urban League, one of the nation's oldest and largest community-based movements dedicated to empowering underserved urban communities.

Maryland

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE) is a coalition of education advocacy, civil rights, and community-based organizations that are committed to eliminating racial disparities in Maryland's education system. MAREE's vision is to ensure K-12 educational experiences of Black and Brown children are healthy, fair, equitable, engaging, culturally affirming, and free from policies and practices rooted in systemic racism.