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To: Concerned Parties

From: Hilary O. Shelton, Director, Washington Bureau

NAACP OPPOSES HIGH-STAKES EDUCATIONAL TESTING

THE ISSUE

Many states are relying on a single examination to determine decisions (such as graduating from high school or promoting students to the next grade), despite the fact that leading education experts nationwide recommend multiple measures of student performance for such decisions. While these “high-stakes” tests serve an important role in education settings, they are not perfect and when used improperly can create real barriers to educational opportunity and progress. Furthermore, one-time, standardized tests may have a disparate impact on students of color, many of whom have not had the benefit of high quality teaching staff (urban school districts have the greatest challenge in attracting and keeping high qualified teachers), adequate classroom resources, or instruction on the content and skills being tested by the standardized tests. Considering additional measures of student achievement, such as grades and teacher evaluations, adds not only to the fairness of a decision with major consequences for students but also increases the validity of such high stakes decisions.

Due to our concerns about the fairness of such testing, as well as the potential impact these tests have on the lives of our children, the NAACP has supported legislation in the past that would require that States follow the recommendation of the National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences. Specifically, the bills require that High Stakes decisions be based upon multiple measures of student performance and, when standardized tests are used by schools and school districts, that the tests be valid and reliable, measure what the student was taught and provide appropriate accommodations for disabled children. Furthermore, the NAACP is opposed to individual students being unfairly denied critical educational opportunities because of their performance on a single, standardized test.

The NAACP will continue to promote the initiatives that ensure equal opportunity, fairness, and accuracy in education by coupling standardized tests with other measures of academic achievement. Using a single standardized test as the sole determinant for promotion, tracking, ability grouping and

graduation is not fair and does not foster equality or opportunity for students regardless of race, income, or gender.”