



The National Association of Magnet and Theme-Based Schools

March 13, 2017

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director, Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney:

As the administration prepares its FY 2018 budget, Magnet Schools of America would like to urge President Trump to increase support to the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP). This school choice program was reauthorized in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and provides grants to local school districts to create specialized theme-based magnet programs. It is the only federal education grant designed specifically to promote innovation, choice, and diversity in the classroom.

There are approximately 4,340 magnet schools in the United States serving more than 3 million students, making them the largest form of public school choice. These enrollment numbers will continue to rise as more school districts embrace the magnet school model as an effective way to turnaround low-performing schools. In fact, a large majority of magnet schools have waitlists full of parents eager to get their students into these high-performing schools. According to a UCLA study, 70 percent of magnet schools that have received Magnet Schools Assistance Program funding report having a waiting list.¹

To meet growing public demand and to make an investment toward achieving the president's goal of providing school choice options to all 11 million students living in poverty, we recommend that funding for the Magnet School Assistance Program be doubled to \$200 million. If funded at this level over the next eight years, the number of students attending magnet schools could increase by approximately 1.3 million.² This would allow nearly 4.3 million students to attend a magnet school of their choice. Since most studies find that magnet schools enroll a larger share of black and Hispanic students than traditional schools, and enroll a higher proportion of low-income students, this strategy would allow the administration to quickly target the exact student population that it is trying to serve.

¹ *Reviving Magnet Schools: Strengthening a Successful Choice Option*, UCLA Civil Rights Project, 2012. Genevieve Siegel-Hawley <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/reviving-magnet-schools-strengthening-a-successful-choice-option>

² Approximately 80,000 students in 28 school districts benefited from MSAP funding during the 2013-2016 grant cycle. (Source: <http://www.msapcenter.com/grantees.aspx>)

Every student deserves access to an excellent education that will help them be college and career ready, and reach their full potential. There is strong evidence demonstrating that students who attend magnet schools have higher levels of academic achievement and graduation rates than those in non-magnet schools.³ When we have adequately supported magnet schools, parents and families will truly have the best possible options to send their children to schools that focus on their strengths, engages them, and motivates them to learn.

We look forward to working with the Trump Administration as it finalizes its first budget. If you have any questions about our funding proposal or magnet schools, please feel free to reach out to me directly by email at todd.mann@magnet.edu or by phone (202) 480-2254.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Mann", written in a cursive style.

Todd Mann
Executive Director

cc: U.S. Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos
Jason Botel, Senior White House Advisor

³ *Magnet School Student Outcomes: What the Research Says*, Genevieve Siegel-Hawley and Erica Frankenberg, National Coalition on School Diversity, 2012. <http://www.magnet.edu/files/policy-conference/diversityresearchbriefno6.pdf>