Cory Booker Unveils Plan To Ensure Educational Opportunity for Every Child and Great Public Schools in Every Community

Cory Will Invest \$200 Billion in School Infrastructure

Plan Includes Dramatic Investments to Raise Teacher Pay and Increase Teacher Diversity; Educators Serving in High-Poverty Districts Would Receive Raises Up to \$15,500

Plan Outlines Vision for Traditional Public Schools and High-performing Public Charter Schools When Local

Communities Call for Them

Newark, NJ — Cory Booker knows the impact a good public school education has on a child's life. When Cory was a baby, his parents fought with the help of civil rights activists to move his family into a neighborhood with good public schools, which in the 1960s were very often in all-white neighborhoods.

That story has personally impacted Cory and his commitment to ensuring every single child has access to a high quality public education. As mayor of Newark, New Jersey, Cory ran toward the tough challenge of improving Newark's schools, and the reforms he set in motion produced results: graduation rates have increased nearly 30 percent since 2008, teacher pay went up, and Newark now has more "beat the odds schools" — schools in high poverty communities with high academic performance — than any other city in the country. Over the course of his time as mayor, college enrollment among Newarkers increased 37 percent.

Today, ahead of tomorrow's Public Education Forum 2020 in Pittsburgh, Cory is outlining how he is going to make limitless educational opportunity a reality for every American child.

As president, Cory will massively increase the federal investment in low-income schools so that all schools can nurture the genius of our children. And as part of his proposal, Cory will also honor, value, and support teachers and public school professionals by increasing teacher pay, expanding loan forgiveness, and investing in teacher training and recruitment, especially to improve teacher diversity.

"Every parent in America hopes that their child will have the opportunities that come from a great public education. The education I received as a child transformed the trajectory of my life," said Cory Booker. "But to get it, my parents had to fight to move my family into a neighborhood with good public schools. 50 years later, the reality is that access to a high-quality public education still too often depends on the zip code a child lives in and the size of their family's bank account.

"We owe the same opportunity provided by a great public education to every child in our country. This isn't an academic exercise for me, it's personal — as mayor, when I saw Newark's kids in crisis, I ran toward the problem and tried to fix it. As a senator, I've continued to fight for public school students and teachers. And as president of the United States, it will be a priority for me to ensure every child has access to the great education that creates a pathway to a better life."

He'll make this vision a reality by:

• Investing at least \$200 billion in school infrastructure to ensure that every school, including in low-income districts and rural areas, are in good condition and able to provide an education that prepares all students for the 21st century workforce.

- Giving teachers serving in high-poverty districts a raise of up to \$15,000 by passing his RAISE Act alongside his proposal to massively expand and reimagine the Earned Income Tax Credit through his Rise Credit. In some states, first-year teachers could see a raise of nearly 50 percent.
- Improving the diversity of our educator workforce, Cory will pass his Diversifying by Investing in Educators and Students to Improve Outcomes For Youth (DIVERSIFY) Act, which would double the award amount for TEACH grants to students who want to become teachers in high-need subjects in high-poverty schools and end yearly automatic budget cuts to the program.
- Tripling funding for Title I schools to improve the quality of education for low-income students across the country.
- Creating a new grant program seeded with at least \$10 billion to incentivize states to reform their school finance systems away from inequitable property tax systems and toward funding systems that ensure an equitable and quality education for every child.
- Support high-quality public charter schools as a strategy to help strengthen public school systems and meet the needs of all students.

In the Senate, Cory has fought against the nomination and harmful policies of Betsy DeVos, voted to end high-stakes standardized testing, and has introduced leading bills to help give public school teachers a raise and invest in new teacher recruitment and training initiatives. As president, Cory would nominate a Secretary of Education who has served as a public school teacher, and who understands the critical role that our public schools play in our society.

Read Cory's full plan below:

A Great Public School in Every Community and Opportunity for Every Child

When I was just a baby, my parents fought to move my family into a neighborhood with good public schools, which in the 1960s were very often in all-white neighborhoods. But real estate agents refused to sell my parents a home because of the color of their skin. It was only when they enlisted the help of civil rights activists and community volunteers who set up a sting operation [under federal fair housing laws] to demonstrate that my parents' civil rights were being violated, and because of the activism of these heroic volunteers, my family was eventually able to move into the town and home that I would grow up in.

Consider the impact of their courageous action: in that town, I benefited from a world-class education, which set me on a trajectory my parents and grandparents could have only dreamed for me--first to college, then a Rhodes scholarship, law school, and eventually elected to serve the people of Newark and New Jersey.

Fifty years later, access to a high-quality public education still too often depends on the zip code a child lives in and the size of their family's bank account. Living in Brick Towers, a high-rise, low-income housing community in Newark's Central Ward, I saw those inequities first-hand. I remember one instance in particular: a neighbor stopped me, grabbed my shirt, and showed me the newspaper she was holding. The story in her hand was both deeply personal but also on that had been told for decades: Her child's public school was failing its students. She begged me to help get her child into a better school; she was desperate, and she knew that for her child, a great education was the only pathway to a better life.

When I was elected mayor, I had no formal authority over our city's schools because the state had seized control from previous leadership, but I saw my kids and families in crisis and I took responsibility. And by almost every measure, we got results. Graduation rates have increased nearly 30 percent since 2008, teacher pay went up, and

Newark now has more "beat the odds schools"--schools in high poverty communities with high academic performance--than any other city in the country. Over the course of my time as mayor, college enrollment among Newarkers increased 37 percent.

So when I think about what a good education can mean, it isn't an academic exercise. It's personal.

What a great public education for all would mean for America.

Public education is our best investment in the future. Our public schools should be a ladder to success for every American child and our competitive edge in the 21st Century global economy.

For millions of American kids, the U.S. public education system is second-to-none, providing world-class education and positioning them to compete and win in the new global economy. But for others, serious disparities remain, the result of systemic and structural barriers. Sixty-five years after the landmark Brown v. Board of Education ruling, more than half of American kids attend "racially-concentrated" districts, or schools where at least three-quarters of the students are either white or non-white. School districts serving students of color and students from low-income households receive significantly less funding than districts serving predominantly students from White and more affluent households, and nationwide there is a \$23 billion gap in funding between predominantly white schools and predominantly nonwhite school districts. These disparities have real-life consequences: a 2015 study found that a 20 percent increase in per-pupil spending for students in low-income households can translate to 25 percent higher earnings and a 20-percentage point reduction in poverty as adults. Gaps persist across geography as well; in 24 states, per student funding is less than it was a decade ago, before the Great Recession.

We also know that inequities extend beyond school funding. Black and Brown students are less likely to have opportunities to take advanced-level courses and Black students are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled, in turn increasing the likelihood they will interact with the criminal justice system as adults. Students with disabilities, English language learners, and those who identify as LGBTQ face additional barriers to opportunity, exacerbated by inadequate resources and supports to meet their needs. These inequities harm both individual families and communities, but they also limit our potential as a nation. America's greatest natural resource is the genius of our children. We must build an education system that taps the full potential of every one of our children -- building strong families, vibrant communities, and a prosperous future for all.

It's simple: we cannot ensure real opportunity for all and prepare our children to lead the world without valuing, empowering, and investing in students, schools, teachers, and communities.

Cory understands the urgency of these challenges. In the Senate, Cory fought against the nomination and shameful policies of Betsy DeVos and voted to end high stakes standardized testing. Cory knows that good teachers are the foundation of good schools, but we're putting teachers in impossible situations, asking them to do too much with too little support, so in the Senate he has introduced leading bills to help give public school teachers a raise and invest in new teacher recruitment and training initiatives. As President, Cory would nominate a Secretary of Education who served as a public school teacher, and who understands the critical role that our public schools play in our society. Every day, Cory will fight for parents, educators and communities by making unprecedented investments in public education so that it is a pathway to real opportunity for all children.

Cory's vision for education

• Public schools that nurtures the genius of every child in America

- Public schools that honors, values, supports and rewards the teachers and public school professionals whose service is fundamental to the health and future of our American society
- Public schools that advances equity and opportunity, working directly to redress long-standing systemic barriers that have resulted in gaps in opportunity and access
- Public schools that fully supports each learner and empower families and communities

How Cory would get us there

- 1. Make our school financing system more equitable by dramatically increasing funding for low-income schools and incentivizing states to reform their education financing systems:
 - a. Triple funding for Title I schools to improve the quality of education for low-income students across the country. Funding would also be used for investments that have been shown to improve student outcomes, like raising teacher pay, increasing teacher training, and reducing class sizes.
 - b. Create a new grant program seeded with \$10 billion to incentivize states to reform their school finance systems away from inequitable property tax systems and toward funding systems that ensure an equitable and quality education for every child. The grants would provide states with technical assistance to begin the transition, as well as funding for states to help shift financing systems.
 - c. Start on Day 1, Cory's Department of Education would ensure that the equity protections of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) are improving equity for low-income students, students of color, students with disabilities, English learners, and students who are homeless or in foster care.

2. Invest in teachers and empower and elevate the teaching profession:

- a. Expand loan forgiveness programs for teachers through the STRIVE Act,
 - i. Cory's bill to increase loan forgiveness for teachers by forgiving loans for teachers in low-income schools after seven years, applied retroactively for teachers who have already completed their service. Cory would also work with Congress to pass the What You Can Do for Your Country Act, which would strengthen and expand the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program that provides debt cancellation to those who enter public service like teachers, social workers, nurses, and first responders. Borrowers would have their student debt cut in half after five years in public service, and receive full debt forgiveness after 10 years in public service.
- b. Improve diversity in our educator workforce so that all students have access to diverse educators by passing the *Diversifying by Investing in Educators and Students to Improve Outcomes For Youth (DIVERSIFY) Act*, which would double the award amount for TEACH grants to students who want to become teachers in high-need subjects in high-poverty schools and end yearly automatic budget cuts to the program. Cory would also strengthen the Teacher Quality Partnership Grant Program and the Create the Educator Academies Grant Program to support teacher preparation programs in high-need areas.
- c. Significantly increase funding for teacher and education support professional preparation programs, including those at HBCUs and other MSIs, targeting funding for recruitment and retention of educators of color, and providing them with access to affordable, high-quality pathway into the profession such as through residencies, and providing funding for licensing and fees so those costs aren't a barrier for low-income educators.
- d. Give teachers a raise by passing his *RAISE Act*, which would provide a refundable tax credit for all public school teachers of up to \$10,000 based on the poverty level of the school they teach in, and double the tax credit to help teachers offset the purchase of school supplies. Coupled with Cory's proposal to massively expand and reimagine the Earned Income Tax Credit through his

- Rise Credit, educators serving in high-poverty districts would see up to \$15,500 increase in take-home pay annually.
- e. Incentivize all states to increase teacher compensation to close wage gaps so that all teachers are paid a competitive wage. This would include increasing compensation so that it is in line with the average salaries of other similarly educated workers in their state, and encourage states to help close gaps in teacher pay within states and to further increase compensation for more experience and training.
- f. Fight for the rights of teachers, education support professionals, and all school employees to join a union and negotiate for better wages and working conditions by passing the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act and the PRO Act, as part of his plan to empower all workers.
- 3. Provide children from marginalized and disadvantaged groups real opportunity by addressing systemic barriers and investing in students:
 - a. Expand and increasing funding for community schools to at least \$500 million. Community schools are an evidence-based approach to help students and the communities they serve by integrating student supports and wraparound services, expanding learning time and opportunities, family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and practices.
 - b. Dedicate significant funding to improve Native American schools, including funding to improve school infrastructure, ensure access to mental health and other social emotional supports, improve graduation rates, and increase investments in Native language programs and recruitment and supports for Native teachers and education professionals.
 - c. Ensure that LGBTQ students can access a safe, quality education. That means reinstating and strengthening protections that Secretary DeVos has revoked and passing the Equality Act, the Student Non-Discrimination Act and the Safe Schools Improvement Act.
 - d. Support programs that help end the school-to-prison pipeline. Undo Secretary DeVos' scrapping of guidance that helped protect students from destructive school discipline policies; and instead focus on social and emotional learning, addressing implicit bias, and restorative practices that ensure that students have access to an education and build trust with the school and community.
 - e. Ensure enforcement of civil rights laws in education, increasing funding for the Department of Education Office for Civil Rights and returning to vigorous enforcement under the office's mission to ensure equal protection for every student.
 - f. Address school segregation by strengthening Department of Education supports to school districts pursuing desegregation strategies, including reinstating the Obama Administration's diversity guidance, increasing funding for magnet schools, passing the Strength in Diversity Act to support locally driven efforts to increase school diversity, ensuring that states and districts are aware that they can use Title I school improvement funds to increase school diversity, and assisting states and school districts in locally led efforts to diversify their schools along racial and socioeconomic lines.
 - g. Providing new funding to help states conduct race equity audits and assistance to address disparate racial impacts.
- 4. Ensure that every school building in America is in good condition and can provide a 21st century education:
 - a. Invest at least \$200 billion in school infrastructure to ensure that every school, including in low-income districts and rural areas, are in good condition and able to provide an education that prepares all students for the 21st century workforce.
 - b. Create the U.S. Environmental Justice Fund, which would replace all residential, school, and daycare lead drinking water service lines and remediate all housing units and schools that contain peeling or chipping lead-based paint and high levels of lead-contaminated dust.

- c. Fight for his housing, climate, and community empowerment plans that will put billions of federal dollars into new energy, housing, water, broadband, and other infrastructure that supports parents, teachers, students, and schools.
- 5. Live up to our nation's promise to provide students with disabilities equal opportunity and a high quality education:
 - a. Fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) so that students with disabilities in K-12 schools can have access to the comprehensive and high-quality services they deserve.
 - b. Ensure that the Office of Civil Rights at the Department of Education has the necessary resources and prioritizes inclusive education and supports for students with disabilities.
 - c. Improve IDEA transition planning that helps students prepare for their future, including by ensuring that transition planning start at age 14, instead of age 16.
 - d. Fully implement the Equity in IDEA rules delayed by the Trump Administration to help address disparities in the identification, placement, and discipline of students of color in our schools and improve educational opportunities for these students.
 - e. Provide increased funding for IDEA services and supports for school districts and communities, like Flint, Michigan, that have increased needs because of environmental impacts, as part of Cory's Environmental Justice Plan.
 - f. Ensure that schools have a plan for evacuating students with disabilities in emergency situations, including in school shooting responses, and provide resources to plan for these situations through IDEA.
- 6. Ensure every child is able to attend a quality preschool:
 - a. Pass the Child Care for Working Families Act, which would expand high-quality prek for all 3 and 4 year olds by making child care and preschool accessible for all families. The bill would make preschool for 3 and 4 year olds free for all children from families making less than 150% of the state median income and child care for children under age 3 free for families making less than 75 percent of the state median income, capping child care costs at 7 percent of income for all families up to 150% of the state median income. It would also increase pay and training for preschool teachers and child care workers, and increase investment in Head Start Programs so they can ensure all eligible children are served.
 - b. Recognize that high-quality education begins before birth, he would fight for major expansion of evidence-based home visiting programs, universal access to quality healthcare, paid family and medical leave, and high-quality maternal health care.
- 7. Give every child the opportunity to graduate high school with college credit and a career credential:
 - a. Ensure that part of the increase in Title I funding ensures that all students have access to rigorous coursework that will allow them to succeed in college and their career, including helping more students earn college credit and career credentials in high school.
 - Help schools expand access to college prep curriculums, dual enrollment and early college programs, AP/IB programs, career pathways, and opportunities for students starting as early as middle school.
- 8. Ensure that every school is a healthy, safe, and welcoming school for all children:
 - a. Expand access to mental health care by incentivizing states to ensure that there are on-sight mental health professionals in every school.
 - b. Increasing funding for after-school and summer learning programs so that high-quality opportunities are accessible and affordable for all families.
 - c. Reestablish the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools and provide it the resources to work with schools to create safer environments to help address student health and safety needs, especially for vulnerable populations including students of color, immigrant students, LGBTQ students, and students with disabilities.

- d. Protect students from seclusion and restraint practices by passing the Keeping All Students Safe Act, which would establish minimum standards to stop seclusion and restraint practices, ensure parental notification, and provide increased funding for training and professional development that helps states and schools implement new policies and better equip school personnel.
- e. Ensure that all children have access to comprehensive sexual health education by passing his Real Education for Healthy Youth Act, by providing grant funding for programs and ensuring that there are plans to include all students in these programs.
- f. Reduce the threat of gun violence at schools with Cory's gun violence prevention plan, which includes a national gun licensing requirement.
- g. Invest in updating all lead pipes, cleaning up Superfund sites, and reducing pollution as party of Cory's plan for Climate Change and Environmental Justice, paid for by rolling back tax subsidies for the fossil fuel industry.
- h. Ensure that all children have their basic needs met at home, with Cory's plan to combat poverty with a child allowance for all low and middle-income parents, expanding nutrition aid, cancelling student lunch debt, and providing funding for universal school lunch.
- i. Invest in affordable housing, strengthening protections from housing discrimination and eviction, and fully funding programs to end homelessness as part of Cory's plan to provide safe and affordable housing for all.
- j. Reinstate and strengthen Title IX rules weakened by Secretary Devos to better protect students who are victims of sexual assault and strengthening these programs at the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.
- k. Expand access to youth sports, as Cory has proposed in his plan to protect student athletes, and the arts.
- I. End ICE raids at schools and other "sensitive locations", which the Trump Administration has been using to terrorize children in schools and communities across America as part of his plan to use his executive authority to reform our immigration system.
- 9. Support high-quality public charter schools as a strategy to help strengthen public school systems and meet the needs of all students:
 - a. Support high-quality charters by allowing them to expand when they help meet local community needs. Encourage the sharing of best practices, like curriculum innovations and professional development.
 - b. Oppose public funding for vouchers and tax credits that take money away from public schools and send money to private schools.
 - c. Modernize the federal charter school program (CSP) by ensuring that grant money goes beyond charter expansion, to improving existing charter schools through grants to improve enrollment systems, understanding and mitigating impacts on home districts, supporting special education initiatives, improving cooperation between small charter operators, fostering collaboration between charters and other public schools, and supporting diversity in enrollment.
 - d. Support community-led high-performing charters and incentivize the inclusion of parents as charter board members and increasing the number of charter school leaders from communities of color.
 - e. End federal funding of charters granted to a for-profit entity, and ending conflicts of interest in charter school management like incentive payments for recruitment.
 - f. Strengthen transparency and accountability for charters by encouraging states to make reforms, including limiting the number of authorizers, ensuring rigorous standards for state charter authorizers, empowering states to strengthen oversight of schools, and holding charter schools to the same performance and transparency standards, including open meetings and records, as other public schools.