

Hello, My name is Helene Hilger, and I am speaking on behalf of the Education Committee of the League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg. We appreciate this opportunity to speak with you, and we commend your current student assignment plan review, which for the first time in decades, we do with intentionality and in the absence of legal pressures.

The League is following your work as you consider how our student assignment plan might be a stronger instrument to accomplish the CMS mission. You recognize that students in schools with high concentrations of poverty--found in many CMS schools--are not meeting your mission aspirations, and that modifying our plan to reduce these clusters is one of several tools CMS can use to succeed in its mission.

As you identify goals and plans to implement them, we urge you to help all community members recognize that it is our collective task to ensure a promising future for all students in all neighborhoods, not just our own. Our community neighborhood demographics challenge us to create school environments that are equitable and diverse. But multi-pronged innovative approaches are possible and go well beyond a debate over busing.

The League believes, and most research shows, that reducing the concentrations of poverty is a worthy goal that will lead to better outcomes in the education of all children. To implement this goal as recommended by the Policy Committee will take courageous action by the Board.

Regardless of their start in life, all children will grow up side-by-side as our next generation of citizens. All will need 21st century skills for living and working in a culture that will be browner and more diverse. Universities and employers already seek candidates who offer life experience in diverse educational environments.

The League has its roots in equity issues beginning with women's right to vote. We support citizen engagement as you are providing here, and we support the proposed student assignment goals as a path to more authentically realizing the CMS mission.