

May 13, 2021

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Chair
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Durbin and Grassley,

As education advocates and school leaders in the greater New Orleans area, we write in support of Kenneth Polite's appointment to serve as the Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division of the United States Department of Justice.

When Mr. Polite was appointed by President Barack Obama to be the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Louisiana, he chose to have his swearing-in ceremony not at a courthouse, but at a public school in New Orleans. He believed that public safety starts with strong public education. Mr. Polite has shared that, in his role as a United States Attorney, which he held from 2013-2017, the only business cards he handed out were the ones he gave to young people. He was driven to connect with them, serve them, and hear their voices first.

This dedication existed before that moment and has persisted long after it. Mr. Polite tutored his fellow students across New Orleans, starting in high school. Later, he worked as a summer high school teacher for Summerbridge New Orleans (now Breakthrough New Orleans). Though his career has been in law, Mr. Polite has also mentored young people throughout New Orleans, and he has been a dedicated member of education and nonprofit boards. Today, he serves as Chair of the Board of New Schools for New Orleans, a nonprofit organization focused on providing an excellent public education to every child in New Orleans. He also serves on the board of the Youth Empowerment Project and is the former Board Chair of New Orleans College Prep school and Breakthrough New Orleans. His work on the boards of the Anti-Defamation League of New Orleans and Ochsner Health System promotes justice, equity, and access in other powerful ways, as does his national work as a member of the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary.

Mr. Polite's own educational and professional journey is illustrious. He graduated from Harvard University after graduating as valedictorian of De La Salle High School in New Orleans. He later graduated *cum laude* from Georgetown University Law Center. For his dedication to public service,

he has also received an honorary degree from Loyola University New Orleans College of Law. Today, he is a partner at Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP. He has also worked at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP; served as Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York; clerked for the Honorable Thomas L. Ambro of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit; and served as the Vice President and Chief Compliance Officer for Entergy Corporation.

Mr. Polite has worked to ensure bright futures and educational opportunities for the youth of New Orleans, and he is thoughtful about the interaction between education and our justice system. Mr. Polite believes that the right place for our children is in schools, not jails. He has spoken about the over-disciplining of students of color in our nation's schools and the need for investment in trauma-informed education.

As our nation faces the continued horrors of police violence against Black people, which deeply affects our children and families, Mr. Polite has been clear that we need significant, meaningful change in the practices and culture of law enforcement. He partnered with the American Civil Liberties Union to help fight racism in policing and fight police misconduct through litigation in Louisiana. He has used his social media platform to draw attention to this issue as well.

His dedication to education exemplifies the same level of tenacity and steadfastness he will demonstrate in his new role with the Department of Justice. As members of the education community in New Orleans, we would be proud to see Mr. Polite take on this role. We are certain he will serve with expertise, skill, and wisdom. We know he would show our national community the same care and dedication he has shown the young people of New Orleans.



Patrick Dobard
CEO
New Schools for New Orleans

Chief Executive Officers, Chief Operating Officers, School Leaders, and Executive Directors of the following New Orleans Charter Schools:

Byron A. Arthur, President and CEO
Delores Taylor Arthur School For Young Men

Mardele S. Early, Founding CEO
Lake Forest Elementary Charter School

Tanya Bryant, CEO
ReNEW Schools

Jolene R. Galpin, CEO
ARISE Schools

Joel Castro, CEO
New Orleans College Prep Schools

Mary C. Haynes-Smith, Principal and CEO
Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary Charter School

Mervin Jackson, Principal and CEO
Warren Easton Charter High School

Rhonda Kalifey-Aluise, CEO
KIPP New Orleans Schools

Talé D. Lockett, CEO
Algiers Charter School Association

Erika Mann, MEd., Head of School
James M. Singleton Charter School

Brionne Marcelle, School Leader
Young Audiences Charter School

Charlotte L. Matthew, Founder and CEO
Legacy of Excellence, Inc.
Benjamin Franklin Elementary Mathematics
and Science School

Jamar McKneely, CEO
InspireNOLA Charter Schools

Kate Mehok, Co-Founder and CEO
Crescent City Schools

Rickie Nutik, CEO
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Stefin Pasternak, CEO and School Director
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Sabrina Pence, CEO
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Patricia M. Perkins, Head of School
Morris Jeff Community School

Meghan Raychaudhuri, CEO
Homer Plessy Community Schools

Marina Schoen, CEO
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Sunny Dawn Summers, School Leader
New Harmony High School

Melanie Tennyson, Head of School and CEO
International School of Louisiana

Kyle Wedberg, Vice President
National Arts Schools Network (ASN)

Dr. Patrick Widhalm, Head of School
Benjamin Franklin High School

Davis Zaunbrecher, COO
Collegiate Academies