



# New Jersey Policy Institute

## **NJPI: Legislature can take Action to Desegregate NJ Schools by Expanding Interdistrict School Choice Program**

**February 19, 2025**

*“NJ Students Shouldn’t Have to Wait for a Court Decision”*

With the desegregation lawsuit failing to progress in mediation talks, Wells Winegar, Executive Director for the New Jersey Policy Institute, released the following statement today:

“New Jersey students in highly segregated schools should not have to wait for the conclusion of a multi-year, on-going legal case. The Legislature and Administration can take action now to remedy this issue by expanding a pre-existing program statewide — New Jersey’s existing Interdistrict School Choice Program.

By expanding the Interdistrict School Choice Program, the state can provide more students—particularly those in highly segregated districts—with access to diverse, high-quality educational opportunities.

This innovative program started in 2000 and permits the state to authorize existing public school districts to become Choice Districts. This designation allows the districts to remove their zip code barriers and accept students from neighboring school districts, at their choice. The state provides the funding to the Choice districts for each additional student they enroll in this program. The local levy stays with the resident school district to ensure stability in their budget.

Every year, families clammer for an opportunity to enter a Choice District to better meet the needs of their child and their family. Yet, with the program frozen for nearly a decade, over 2,000 of those students remain on the wait list each year, with two counties — Essex and Middlesex — without a single choice district.

Lifting the Interdistrict School Choice enrollment freeze and increasing choice district participation can provide immediate opportunities for students. Given the collapse of mediation in the desegregation lawsuit, we encourage the Legislature and Administration to take action now on behalf of all New Jersey students and expand the state’s highly successful Interdistrict School Choice Program.”

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