

My name is Carol Backus. I live in Ward 12. I speak tonight as a member of the Executive Committee of the Granite State Organizing Project.

The GSOP works in Manchester, Nashua and Southern New Hampshire to assist residents in addressing needs and concerns so that they can improve the lives of individuals and families. You may be familiar with our work to bring to the city's attention issues such as bedbug infestations and substandard housing. You may be aware that we work with public housing residents in Elmwood Gardens. We also work with youth in our city schools to ensure that minority and immigrant students have a voice. Our youth group is called Young Organizers United, or YOU. I am not here to speak for these students, because they are here to speak for themselves, which they do ably and eloquently. I am here, however, to speak in support of their efforts.

The Manchester School District, under scrutiny from the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Education, made an agreement to ensure equity. That means **equal opportunity for all students to succeed**. The lack of equitable outcomes stems from our country's long history of racial and cultural discrimination, not from any decision or any one person's actions. We are not the only city to face this problem. I want to encourage you to continue to implement the draft plan resolution agreement and to help make Manchester a model for others to follow.

Manchester has historically been a city of immigrants. We are French Canadian, Irish, Italian, Greek, and Balkan immigrants. My own ancestors were poor Scots-Irish who arrived through Philadelphia too late to find good land and were forced down the Appalachian valleys to the south. I immigrated to Manchester, New Hampshire from the South in 1978. I found a minority here who identify themselves culturally as Black Americans and a significant Latino population. More recently we have welcomed Somalis and Bhutanese as well as many other ethnicities.

From the Draft Resolution Agreement developed for the Office of Civil Rights, Action Step 6.4 regarding a variety of course selections to reflect the student population, and 9.2 regarding reframing the hiring process for compatibility with working in a diverse environment, deserve immediate attention.

Let's get going. GSOP stands ready to help.

Thank you for your time and for all your volunteer service as members of BOSOC.

Statement to the Manchester Board of School Committee September 14, 2016