

**Minneapolis-St. Paul Alumnae Chapter**  
**Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated**  
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## **Issue: Gender Equity in Education, Dismantling Disparities for Black Girls**

### **Introduction and Ask**

The Minneapolis-St. Paul Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated are asking for the following:

### **Support the Senate Bill S. 1964 and House Bill H.R. 3513 - Gender Equity in Education Act of 2019**

### **Background**

Trauma is something that everyone may experience at some point in their life. Unfortunately, some experience trauma more frequently at a young age; Black females are more likely than other group to experience traumatic experiences at young ages (Davidson, et. al., 2017). These traumatic experiences are exhibited in the school setting, as evidenced by the school-to-prison pipeline and inequitable environments preventing every student from achieving their highest goals (Morris, 2016).

According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, a traumatic event is a frightening, dangerous or violent event that poses a threat to a child's life or bodily integrity. Witnessing a traumatic event that threatens life or physical security of a loved one can also be traumatic. Children who have been exposed to one or more traumatic experiences over the course of their lives can develop unhealthy coping mechanisms. Some of these mechanisms include intense and ongoing emotional upset, depressive symptoms or anxiety, behavioral changes, difficulties with self-regulation, problems relating to others or forming attachments, academic difficulties, etc. (Peterson, 2018).

Current school disciplinary practices make it impossible for Black girls suffering from the reactions to trauma to thrive at school. The Educator Policy Innovation Center (Davidson, et al, 2017) found that administrators and educators disproportionately impose punishments on Black students for subjective behavioral infractions. A young Black girl is more likely than a young White girl to be punished for talking or hanging around a hallway. Black girls are three times more likely than White girls to receive an office referral; this difference is substantially wider than the gap between Black boys and White boys (Morris and Perry, 2017).

Black girls represent 20 percent of female preschool enrollment, but 54 percent receive one or more out-of-school suspensions (Morris, Conteh, & Harris-Perry, 2018). Moreover, Black girls in public schools nationwide were suspended at a rate of 12 percent, compared with a rate of just 2 percent for white girls, and more than girls of any other race or ethnicity (Johnson, 2014).

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Within minority groups, darker-skinned girls are disciplined more harshly than lighter-skinned girls. Our school policies need to be trauma informed so we disrupt the cycle of trauma in our children's lives.

Schools are trauma informed when they:

- balance accountability with an understanding of traumatic behavior;
- teach students the school and classroom rules while reinforcing that school is not a violent place and abusive discipline (which students who have experienced trauma may be accustomed to) is not allowed at school;
- minimize disruptions to education with an emphasis on positive behavioral supports and behavioral intervention plans;
- create consistent rules and consequences;
- model respectful, nonviolent relationships; and
- involve open communication and relationship-building with families (McInerney & McKlindon, 2014).

### **Support for The Gender Equity in Education Act**

For the past three years the Patsy T. Mink and Louise M. Slaughter Gender Equity in Education Act (**S. 1964**)<sup>1</sup> has been introduced into the senate by Senator Mazie Hirono, to support educational entities in fully implementing title IX and reducing and preventing sex discrimination in all areas of education, and for other purposes. This bipartisan bill attempts to promote gender equity, support educational entities for full fulfillment of the intention of title IX while providing training and practice implementing best practice techniques and provide educational environments safe and free of sex-based bullying, harassment, and violence.

This can be accomplished through establishing an office of gender equity, support the coordinators of the work, utilize research and development for fact and research based approaches and dissemination of successful approaches. By support this effort on the issue of gender, the issue of inequities of discipline based upon race can be properly addressed.

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<sup>1</sup> The complementary House bill, **H.R.3513** introduced by Congressman Doris Matsui supports and complements Senate Bill 1964.

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## Resources

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Peterson, S. (2018, November 05). *About Child Trauma*. Retrieved January 17, 2019, from <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/about-child-trauma>