



**For Immediate Release**

Thursday, January 11, 2024

**LDF Media**

212-965-2200 / [media@naacpldf.org](mailto:media@naacpldf.org)

## **Thurgood Marshall Institute Releases New Report Examining Black Student Outcomes During Pandemic**

Today, the Legal Defense Fund's ([LDF](#)) [Thurgood Marshall Institute](#) released a [new report](#), *Beyond Learning Loss: Prioritizing the Needs of Black Students as Public Education Emerges from a Pandemic*, authored by Senior Researcher Dr. Sandhya Kajeepeta. The report examines a broad range of outcomes to describe the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black students, and offers key recommendations to improve educational equity and better serve their needs.

The report constitutes the first time that such a wide range of student outcomes have been collectively presented and synthesized to illuminate the impacts of the pandemic on public education and how these impacts vary by race. While attention to the impacts of the pandemic on Black students has heavily focused on “learning loss,” which refers to declines in student academic performance before and after the start of the pandemic, this narrow focus overlooks the ways in which the public school system has historically underserved Black students. The report’s findings confirm that Black students will not be best served by a return to pre-pandemic normalcy, but rather by structural changes to promote educational equity.

“This report emerges during a pivotal time, where our education system stands at a critical juncture necessitating systemic reform tailored to address the unique needs of Black students,” said Karla McKanders, Director of the Thurgood Marshall Institute. “Positioned as the proverbial canaries in the mine, addressing Black students’ needs offers an avenue for pioneering new educational approaches that will not only benefit their individual growth but also contribute to the flourishing of our democracy. Dr. Kajeepeta's groundbreaking research seizes the opportunity presented by a global health crisis and unprecedented investments in public education, urging a transformative reimagining of public education. The report advocates for a forward-looking approach that holistically addresses the educational, health, and socioemotional wellbeing of Black children, recognizing and remedying the exacerbated challenges brought about by the pandemic.”

The report reveals a number of findings regarding Black students’ educational and health outcomes. Black students currently face an erasure of their culture and identity from academic curriculum through anti-truth laws and book bans. They have also experienced strikingly high rates of health consequences from COVID-19, caregiver loss due to COVID-19, attempted suicide, feelings of disconnectedness, and disruptions to home life, including the highest rates of hunger and homelessness of any racial group. Black students also continue to face disproportionately high rates of exclusion from school through suspension and expulsion.

“It is expressly clear that the COVID-19 pandemic seriously disrupted everyday life and educational experiences for students, with unique health and education challenges compounded for Black students. Through this research, I aimed to take a comprehensive look at how Black students have been uniquely impacted by the upheaval of the pandemic across a wide range of outcomes,” said Sandhya Kajeepeta, Senior Researcher at the Thurgood Marshall Institute and author of the report. “We have a singular opportunity to confront these present-day and historic challenges through equitable investments in public education that place Black students’ needs at the forefront. It is my hope that this report serves as a valuable resource that will foster a deeper understanding of the racialized impacts of the pandemic and inform meaningful investments in public education.”

The *Beyond Learning Loss* report makes the following recommendations to improve educational equity and better serve Black students:

- Invest in material school and home resources
- Implement high-impact tutoring
- Eliminate police from schools and the overreliance on exclusionary school discipline
- Recruit and retain high-quality Black educators
- Protect the right to a truthful, inclusive education

The full report can be found [here](#).

###

*Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) is the nation’s first civil rights law organization. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.*