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May 01, 2018

The Honorable Governor Bill Haslam  
State Capitol, 1st floor  
600 Charlotte Avenue  
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Haslam,

We, the undersigned members of the Metropolitan Nashville Board of Public Education, write to express our deep concern with HB2315, and urge you to use your authority to veto this harmful proposal before it becomes law. This policy would threaten the well-being of tens of thousands of Tennessee's students, make parents and students feel less safe enrolling or participating in schools, and make it more difficult to fulfill our educational mission. The specter that public schools and colleges could be used to help enforce immigration law, undermines our constitutional mandate and aspirations to educate all of Tennessee's children.

HB2315 prohibits state and local government entities from enacting "sanctuary policies," which are so broadly defined as to virtually require state and local governments, including public schools and college campuses, to perform the work of immigration enforcement agents. As board members of Tennessee's most diverse district, it is our job to not only ensure that all Tennessee students receive a high-quality education, but also to ensure that all students and families have access to a safe and nurturing educational environment. HB2315 would undermine our district's work to ensure all students can learn, grow, and thrive.

We also have a constitutional obligation to ensure that all students have access to education, regardless of immigration status. By entangling federal immigration enforcement with our public school system, student and families will be less likely to enroll or attend in school and engage in school activities, likely violating our mandate under *Plyer v. Doe*.

As we learned in the aftermath of the massive ICE raid in Bean Station last month, many immigrant families are already afraid to send their children to school. The day after ICE conducted the worksite raid, more than 500 children missed school in Hamblen County alone. We must take steps to ensure that families consider schools safe places, regardless of federal immigration policy. This work will be made much more difficult if HB2315 is allowed to become law.

HB2315 prevents law enforcement officers, which would include school resource officers and campus police, from limiting inquiries about immigration and citizenship status, even when responding to a victim or witness of a crime or when necessary to protect access to school. Schools would be prohibited from adopting formal policies or even informal practices to reassure both students and parents that they would not be asked about their immigration status. We fear that thousands of immigrant students and their families in our district will no longer feel

safe entering our schools, to attend class or participate in events, if they may be asked to prove their citizenship.

HB2315 would also require state and local government agencies, including schools and public universities, to share information about the immigration status of members of the school community with federal agents if asked. Schools must be able to assure parents and students that their information will be kept confidential. For families to feel safe enrolling their children in schools or participating in campus events, they must trust that we will not share information that will be used to target them for deportation. Furthermore, this requirement could subject our institutions to liability, if we are forced to turn over legally protected information.

It is counter to our values and work to assist in the separation of families. A body of research has established that immigration enforcement actions and deportations have a harmful impact on the health, academic performance, and well-being of children. For example, a child's risk of mental health trauma, including depression, anxiety, or severe psychological distress increases following the detention and/or deportation of a parent. We should not allow our schools, to facilitate the separation of families.

Throughout your nearly eight years as governor, you have helped our state make tremendous strides in education. From improving our K-12 system to increasing college access and completion, you have worked to make sure that all Tennesseans have access to high quality education. This extreme bill threatens to undermine this progress and make our college campuses and public schools inaccessible and unsafe for tens of thousands of immigrant families. We urge you to exercise your constitutional authority and prevent this harmful bill from becoming law.

Respectfully,