



## **Supervisor Juli E. Briskman Initiates Analysis of Harm Caused By Operation of Segregated Schools in Loudoun County**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 16, 2021

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LEESBURG, VA — Algonkian District Supervisor Juli E. Briskman is introducing a [Board Member Initiative](#) (BMI) to examine the impact of Loudoun County’s overt preservation of segregated schools, support of Massive Resistance, and potential compensation to those impacted.

The Board of Supervisors voted in September 2020 to join with the Loudoun County School Board in a formal statement of apology for the operation of segregated schools well after the federal mandate to desegregate. At that meeting Supervisor Briskman lamented that the letter did not go far enough:

“Words are great, but I think that we could do a little more toward the healing process,” she said.

Briskman’s BMI will be presented for approval at the Sept. 21 Board of Supervisors business meeting and documents multiple policies enacted by the county Board and the Loudoun County School Board that prevented Black students from receiving the same level of education as white students. The initiative asks the board to send the item to the standing joint committee of both boards to take up the issue and make recommendations for possible solutions.

“It is painfully clear that previous boards sought to undermine and deliberately underfund the education of Black students in Loudoun County and these are the types of measures that set back our brothers and sisters for generations,” Briskman said, citing [Brookings Institution national data](#) that found white families are on average 10 times wealthier than Black families. “Racial disparities are not the result of moral failings or lack of intellect, but fall squarely in the domain of systemic racism, which was perpetrated by our boards.”

The intent of the measure is to have the joint committee study the impact of specific educational discrimination in Loudoun and to make recommendations in partnership with Loudoun’s Black community.

“Rectifying these disparities is a moral imperative. It is my hope these discussions will lead to mitigation of these egregious harms, at least on the local level, and potentially set an example as to how our nation could respond,” Briskman said. “We need to have these conversations in order to heal our county, our state, and our country.”

### **BACKGROUND**

On January 3, 1956, the Loudoun Board of Supervisors voted in favor of a proposed amendment to Virginia’s Constitution to allow the use of public funds for private schools. The motivation behind this

amendment was to reduce the cost of private education for white families trying to avoid integrated public school systems. Only 20 days later, both the Board of Supervisors and the School Board met to discuss possible additions to Douglass Elementary School and Douglass High School. According to the meeting minutes, both bodies agreed that no improvements should be made until “reasonable assurance was given by the parents of colored children of the County that they conform to the opinion that their education be promoted better by their continued school attendance on a segregated basis.”

The Board of Supervisors furthered its segregationist stance in August 1956 by approving a resolution to stop funding public schools “if the federal government forced integration.” The Board of Supervisors, in 1956, voted unanimously “to support the Governor’s plan that was designed to ensure racial segregation, including giving the Governor the power to close any schools facing a federal desegregation order.”

Primary documents collected through the Edwin Washington Project starkly illustrate the unfair school conditions in Loudoun. According to the project: “At Bull Run, every morning each boy brought a lump of coal to the classroom, because coal wasn’t provided by the school system, and others walked to a nearby stream to bring buckets of water for the children to drink.” More details of the hardships facing Black schools can be found [here](#) and in the item authored by Briskman.

Loudoun County was one of the last school districts in the nation to desegregate a full 14 years after it was mandated by *Brown V. Board of Education*.

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