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April 20, 2021

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of our 3 million members and the 50 million students they serve, we urge you to vote YES on the Washington, D.C. Admission Act, H.R. 51. Votes on this issue may be included in the NEA Report Card on the 117th Congress.

H.R. 51 will make the District of Columbia the 51st state, correcting the injustice that denies the city's 712,000 residents full representation in Congress. The denial of full representation—and therefore, full citizenship—in a majority-Black city is particularly egregious given our nation's history of suppressing the Black vote. The District of Columbia has a larger population than Vermont and Wyoming. District residents pay the highest per-capita federal income taxes in the nation and in total, pay more in taxes than residents of 21 other states. Yet, taxation without representation and denial of full citizenship endures in the capital of the nation that promotes democracy to the world.

H.R. 51 would grant full citizenship rights to D.C. residents while also preserving the constitutionally required district that houses the federal government, our monuments, and the National Mall. The neighborhoods and commercial areas where the people of the District of Columbia live and raise their families would comprise the 51st state.

This issue is also about safety. We are in a time of heightened protests and demonstrations across our nation, many of which occur in our Nation's Capital. On January 6, we watched violent marauders attempt to overthrow our government. Yet, because the District of Columbia is not a state, its government does not have the ability to deploy the National Guard. This places citizens in harm's way and played a role in the death and destruction of the 6th.

On April 16, the city celebrated "D.C. Emancipation Day," the date in 1862 when thousands of slaves in the District of Columbia were freed. The D.C. Admission Act is in many ways a long overdue tribute to those enslaved men and women, whose humanity and voices were so long denied—even after they were "free." Citizens are not truly free when they are denied equal representation because of where they live. D.C. residents, like residents of the 50 states, deserve equal voting rights, the right to self-government, and a meaningful voice in Congress.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association