



A Union of Professionals

AFT News Release

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AFT on Nomination of Dr. Miguel Cardona as Education Secretary

WASHINGTON—*American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten and AFT Connecticut President Jan Hochadel issued the following statement after President-elect Joe Biden nominated Miguel A. Cardona to be the next U.S. secretary of education:*

The AFT's Weingarten said: "Miguel Cardona is not just a proud product of public schools—he's made strengthening public education and fighting for equity his life's work. With his experience as a student, fourth-grade teacher, principal, assistant superintendent and commissioner in Connecticut, Dr. Cardona—a former AFT member—will transform the Education Department to help students thrive, a reversal of the DeVos disaster of the last four years.

"But Dr. Cardona, whose family moved from Puerto Rico, won't just repair the damage done—he'll act to fulfill the promise and potential of public education and higher education as an opportunity agent for all students, regardless of demography or geography, knowing full well that doesn't happen without resources and a deep respect for educators.

"His commitment to public education, to our students and to listening to and respecting the wisdom of educators will be crucial as the Biden administration helps school districts across America meet the social, emotional and instructional needs of students and moves to safely, responsibly and equitably reopen school buildings.

"I worked closely with Dr. Cardona during his time in the Meriden, Conn., school district. If you want an example of how labor and management can come together to improve learning and student achievement, you need only look at Meriden. His deep respect for educators and their unions will travel with him to Washington—and that commitment to collaboration is crucial to providing the resources and social and emotional supports to safely reopen schools.

"There is great potential for a renaissance in public education after years and years of the school wars. That is the hope that Dr. Cardona, with Joe Biden, Kamala Harris and Dr. Jill Biden at his side, represents. The Department of Education is the primary vehicle by which the Biden-Harris administration can engage educators, parents, and legislators and administrators at every level. It can lift up great practices and strategies. Instead of promoting competition, it can foster cooperation; instead of destabilizing, it can help American schools recover and grow. Instead of dividing, it can help students of all diverse backgrounds grow and thrive.

"And, in higher education, it can address the student loan crisis and strengthen colleges and universities—especially HBCUs and minority-serving institutions.

“From day one, educators will have a trusted partner in Dr. Cardona, and I couldn’t be more excited to get started.”

AFT Connecticut’s Hochadel said: “When he was first appointed as Connecticut’s education commissioner, Dr. Cardona outlined an overall vision of ‘reimagining’ education here in Connecticut. Before the pandemic hit, he engaged educators on issues ranging from reducing standardized testing to ensuring equity for all students to closing the diversity gap in our schools.

“The COVID-19 crisis has forced new and unique challenges on administrators, classroom teachers and school support staff alike. As Dr. Cardona himself has said, in 2020 ‘everyone’s a first-year teacher again; everyone’s a first-year principal.’ Our union members understand that even the commissioner is in his first-year, along with the rest of us.

“The opportunity for a true educator with classroom experience and a leader who understands that challenge is exciting for anyone who cares about the future of America’s public schools.”

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The American Federation of Teachers is a union of 1.7 million professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

AFT Connecticut represents approximately 30,000 professionals across the state, including PreK-12 teachers, paraeducators and education support personnel in 31 local and regional school districts. For more information, visit www.aftct.org or follow the labor federation on Twitter at @AFTCT and on Facebook at AFT Connecticut.