



Resolution Encouraging Parent Leaders to Condemn the Use of Ableist Slurs

Sponsors: Dr. Kaliris Y. Salas-Ramirez, Sophie Oulai, Lacey Jordan, Lawanda Joyner, Johanna Dominguez, Elizabeth Soto Cardona, Adriana Tlacomulco, Tia Jackson, and Vandana Bonilla.

Whereas, slurs targeting people with disabilities have long been commonplace, resulting in stigma, exclusion, and harm.

Whereas, over the past several decades such slurs have increasingly been recognized as harmful.

Whereas, the “R-Word” insinuates a perceived lack of intelligence or capability, perpetuating the idea that individuals with disabilities are “less than” or not fully human, and further, was historically used as a medical term to justify the [institutionalization](#), [forced sterilization](#), and [denial of an education](#) for individuals with disabilities.

Whereas, the use of the words *retard* or *retarded* (often referred to as the “R-word”) continues to cause significant, documented harm to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

Whereas, [the terminology for people with intellectual disabilities has varied over time](#), and terms like “retarded” that may have been widely accepted medical terminology generations ago under the harmful influence of eugenics and other pseudoscience are now no longer used in the medical community and are widely considered to be offensive and marginalizing.

Whereas, recognizing that such terms had become harmful slurs, [in 2010 then-President Barack Obama signed legislation replacing the term “mental retardation” with “intellectual disability” in federal law and policy](#).

Whereas, the work of countless disability advocates has been essential in [both changing the law and policy](#) around this issue and in educating students, teachers, and other citizens of the harm that such slurs can cause.

Whereas, despite the progress that has been made this work is ongoing.

Whereas, [studies show that students with disabilities are more likely to be bullied](#), and the “R-Word” is often the tool used.

Whereas, [victims of bullying involving this type of language are more likely to develop severe anxiety](#), leading to academic fallout – school aversion, chronic absenteeism, and lower graduation rates.

Whereas, pursuant to its [Respect for All](#) program launched in 2007, New York City Public Schools maintains a commitment “to maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment that is free from harassment, intimidation and/or bullying, sexual harassment, and discrimination on account of actual or perceived race, color, age, creed, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship/immigration status, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, or weight.”

Whereas, in our current national climate of backlash against the important work of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, use of slurs like “retarded” has seen a resurgence in the media, including by [podcaster Joe Rogan who said “the word ‘retarded’ is back, and it’s one of the great cultural victories.”](#)

Whereas, [the word “retards” was recently used in a social media post by the assistant attorney general of the Civil Rights Division of the federal Justice Department](#), whose purview is supposed to include protecting the rights of people with disabilities.

Whereas, the current president of the United States recently referred to a political opponent as “seriously retarded” in a [social media post](#) peppered with racist, xenophobic, and Islamophobic slurs.

Whereas, [a member of the Panel for Educational Policy \(PEP\) recently engaged in a derogatory use of this term](#), prompting the PEP chair to call upon him to apologize, adding that the term is a “harmful slur that carries a long history of marginalization and pain for the disability community,” and that “such language is fundamentally at odds with the mission of this Panel and the inclusive environment we strive to build for our students and their families.”

Whereas, the chief executive of the Arc of the United States, a disability rights organization, referred to the resurgence of the use of this slur as “[language used by bullies to bully](#).”

Whereas, people have the right to express themselves, but “free speech” does not mean freedom from consequences.

Whereas, defending free speech also involves protecting the right of people to “call out” others for remarks that are ignorant or offensive.

Therefore, be it resolved, that the District 4 Community Education Council (CEC4) condemns the use of the slur “retarded” and all variations thereof.

Therefore, be it resolved, that CEC4 defends the rights of parents and disability advocates to [call out](#) the use and/or normalization of such slurs.

This Resolution was approved at D4 CEC Calendar Meeting held on March 11th, 2026, by 9 votes.

Council members voted as:

Motion by Lawanda Joyner seconded by Elizabeth Soto-Cardona.

Dr. Kaliris Salas-Ramire (Yes), Sophie Oulai (Yes), Lacey Jordan (Yes), Johanna Dominguez (Yes), Elizabeth Soto-Cardona (Yes), Adriana Tlacomulco (No vote), Lawanda Joyner (Yes), Vandana Bonilla (Yes), Tia Jackson (Yes) and Kiera Jerez Alston (Yes).