TESTIMONY OF DAVID J. ARMOR BEFORE THE MINNESOTA INTEGRATION REVENUE REPLACEMENT ADVISORY TASK FORCE DECEMBER 20, 2011

I am Professor Emeritus of Public Policy in the School of Public Policy at George Mason University, where I taught advanced statistics in our PhD program. I received my PhD in Sociology from Harvard University, and was also an Assistant and Associate Professor there. Later I was a Senior Social Scientist at the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica and served as an elected member of the Los Angeles Board of Education. I have written three books and dozens of articles and book chapters on school desegregation and academic achievement. I have also conducted expert studies and testified as an expert witness in dozens of desegregation cases, including the Minneapolis equity case in the mid-1990s.

I will first offer some summary comments about the social science evidence on academic and social benefits of school desegregation. Then I will review findings for some of the major studies in this field, including some case studies which, I think, offer the most compelling evidence on these issues.

PART I SUMMARY

Regarding academic benefits, there is no evidence of a consistent and strong relationship between school desegregation and achievement test scores for racial or ethnic minorities. The effects of desegregation are highly variable, depending on various conditions and also depending on the research methods being utilized. When averaged over a large number of studies, the effect is usually weak or nonexistent. Most important, when we examine case studies of school districts that have been desegregated, there is no evidence for a significant benefit to academic achievement.

Regarding longer term outcomes, such as college attendance and wages, there are many fewer compelling studies. To date, there is no published study, using a reasonably rigorous research design—that is, a longitudinal study of individual students—showing that school desegregation raises college attendance rates or produces significantly higher earnings for African American students.

Third, I do not think there is solid evidence that school desegregation has produced a significant benefit for race relations and prejudice. The best studies focusing specifically on the effects of school desegregation find no consistent benefit, and in fact more studies show increases in prejudice rather than reductions. There are some recent studies finding that interracial contact produces a modest reduction in racial prejudice, but the studies do not focus on school desegregation per se.

Finally, let me say at the outset that I have been disappointed by these outcomes, because I was a strong supporter of desegregation when my studies began four decades ago. But as a social scientist, I think we have to face the evidence if we truly want to help minority students and families. Because racial and economic balance does not produce major benefits for minorities simply means we need to pursue other more effective solutions.

PART II SOME MAJOR STUDIES

(SLIDE 1) Regarding desegregation benefits for academic achievement, one of the most frequently cited studies is one conducted by Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin. This is a very sophisticated longitudinal study of Texas data that went through many revisions. When it was finally published, it showed that when black and white students were analyzed separately—which is essential for any evaluation of desegregation benefits—they found no statistically significant effect of racial composition on black test scores.

- (SLIDE 2) I conducted a similar longitudinal analysis of statewide data for South Carolina, and I also found no significant effect on black achievement. After 5 years of desegregation, desegregated black students only scored a half point more than segregated black students
- **(SLIDE 3)** A similar analysis for North Carolina found no significant effect of racial composition. After 5 years, desegregated black students only scored one point higher than segregated black students.

In the interest of time, I will discuss just four major case studies of the effect of desegregation on the achievement gap. These are large school districts that had comprehensive desegregation plans.

- **(SLIDE 4)** The metropolitan desegregation plan for Wilmington and New Castle County, Delaware, produced one of the most racially balanced school systems in the country, including both city and suburban school districts. But there was no change in the achievement gap over the 8 years of the study.
- (SLIDE 5) The extensive desegregation plan in Kansas City, Missouri—one of the most expensive in the nation, costing nearly \$2 billion—led to no change in the black-white or the Hispanic-white achievement gap over a 7 year period of the study.
- (SLIDE 6) The very high degree of racial balance in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, often cited as the most successful example of desegregation in the nation, did not reduce the achievement gap over the 20 year period of study.
- (SLIDE 7) Perhaps most relevant to the hearing today, the extensive desegregation accomplished in Minneapolis during the early to mid 1980s did not reduce the achievement gap over the next 14 years. In fact, black scores started declining, and the gap widened, in the early 1990s.

There are many other case studies with similar results: Pasadena, Norfolk, Dallas, Riverside, Calif. just to name a few. In fact, I do not know of a single example where a desegregated school district produced a significant reduction in minority-white achievement gap.

Turning to the social benefits of desegregation on race relations and prejudice, the best studies targeting the effect of school desegregation are the meta analyses published by St. John in 1975 and Stephan in 1986.

(SLIDE 8) For white students, St. John found as many cases where desegregation increased prejudice as decreased it, and the later studies by Stephan actually found more cases of increased white prejudice. For black students, both studies found more cases of increased prejudice than reduced prejudice, although there were also a lot of studies with no or mixed effects.

Finally, there is a lot of discussion now about socioeconomic integration replacing racial integration. There is much less research on this type of desegregation, and there are not many case studies. However, there is no theoretical reason to expect a different result, since race and poverty are so highly correlated.

(SLIDE 9) I think the best case study evidence is from Wake County, which started socioeconomic integration in 2000 and maintained it for many years. This chart compares elementary math scores in Wake County to Charlotte-Mecklenburg, which stopped mandatory desegregation in the late 1990s resulting in more segregated schools. We see that, once we adjust for individual student SES, black students in Wake County score identical to black students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, most of whom attend segregated schools.