

Dear Senator Williams Graves,

Please forgive the presumption, but after watching yesterday's Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Committee meeting online, there are a couple of points of necessary historical perspective and accuracy.

Perhaps most importantly, adding the descendants of those directly affected by Massive Resistance is not at all simply a matter of not letting money go to waste.

It was the original goal of the program 22 years ago.

I am responsible for the Brown Scholarship Program. Not bragging at all because I know the Holy Spirit of God put the idea into my head on the morning of February 18, 2003—fully formed—as I drove to my editor's office at The Farmville Herald. And that idea, from the very beginning, included the children and grandchildren of those locked out of school. Especially in Prince Edward County where public education was wiped off the face of the earth for five years.

That left approximately 2,000 African-American children in the county, and about 200 white children, without a formal education in their lives. Common sense told me, and studies subsequently confirmed, the generational impact Massive Resistance has had. A child raised in a home by parents who are illiterate because they were denied an education are most definitely affected. And their children, as well.

I was also part of the small team that wrote the original legislation in the summer of 2003. The children and grandchildren were in the draft legislation until the AG's office reviewed it and said doing so would be unconstitutional because “we couldn't prove the children and grandchildren were harmed.” Thankfully, a subsequent review over a decade later reversed that ruling and the General Assembly unanimously—unanimously—approved the inclusion of lineal and collateral descendants in 2023.

Including the Brown Scholarship Program in the Commonwealth's biennium budgets is vital, in my opinion, to ensure the fiscal integrity of the program and allow it to smoothly achieve the full mission given it by legislature and signed into law by Governor Youngkin.

Following that 2023 action, I wrote a federal grant that was supported by Senators Kaine and Warner and won \$500,000 in federal funding. At

the same time, I enlisted the support of Delegate Terry Kilgore and Senator Creigh Deeds, who were patrons of a budget amendment which won \$2 million in the 2024-26 biennium budget.

Lastly, the Brown Scholarship Program has had overwhelmingly bipartisan support since the vote for Gov. Warner's budget amendment funding the program in June 2004. This speaks so well for all of us as Virginians. The Brown Scholarship Program flies with Republican and Democratic wings. As it should.

One of my biggest allies in 2004 was former GOP House Speaker Bill Howell. We spoke often as events unfolded 21 years ago and have stayed in touch, as well. He was vital in directly connecting me with Del. Kilgore for conversations ahead of the 2024 legislative session.

This letter is longer than I intended, but I've written a whole book telling the inside story of the program's creation: *The Road to Healing* (NewSouth Books, 2019), so I guess it's shorter than it could have been.

Thank you for being a committed member of the Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Committee. If I can ever help as an historical resource, please let me know.

Sincerely,
Ken Woodley