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**Better Together Commission Launching Community-wide Canvassing Effort to Engage Jackson Residents**

*Canvassers Will Knock on 60,000 Doors to Understand Residents' Ideas and Attitudes about Education in Jackson Public Schools*

**JACKSON, Miss. (June 22, 2018)** – The Better Together Commission will launch an eight-week canvassing effort early next month as part of its ongoing work to engage Jackson residents in meaningful dialogue about their hopes and aspirations for the Jackson Public School District (JPS). Over the next two months, canvassers will knock on 60,000 doors in neighborhoods across the city and invite residents to complete a 10-to-15 minute survey that will help the commission better understand the range of issues and ideas that are important to the community.

“We believe the canvassing effort will provide us a more detailed and nuanced understanding of community needs and concerns by talking directly to Jackson residents,” said Dr. Ivey Allen, co-chair of the commission. “The information gathered through our canvassing efforts will provide a more complete picture of what’s happening in neighborhoods across the city, which will ultimately help the community decide what the best solutions are for students in Jackson Public Schools.”

Canvassing will begin in early July and conclude in late August. Canvassers will walk through neighborhoods in teams of two wearing gray t-shirts with bright green lettering so they can be easily identified. Residents who are not available to speak directly with canvassers will be able to share their input via a print survey canvassers will leave behind or by responding to an online survey on the Better Together website—[bettertogether.formississippi.org](http://bettertogether.formississippi.org).

The information collected through this effort will complement results from the study currently being conducted by Insight Education Group and broader community engagement efforts led by community-based organizations. Collectively, the results from these efforts will support the development of a community-wide vision and plan of action to create an excellent, equitable education system that benefits all students in JPS.

To date, the commission has facilitated community listening sessions, conducted a telephone poll of Jackson residents, and hosted an interactive session to develop a framework for the community engagement efforts. On the last Thursday of each month, the commission holds a public meeting to provide updates on the progress of its work. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, June 28 at the Margaret Walker Alexander Library (2525 Robinson Street) from 4:15 pm – 5:45 pm. Information present at previous meetings is available on the Better Together website.

The commission was formed late last year by Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant, Jackson Mayor Chokwe Lumumba, the Jackson Public School District and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in an effort to find an innovative solution that transforms JPS into a high-achieving public school district in order to meet the needs of its 25,000-plus students.

“This is an opportunity for residents in every corner of the city to add their voice and their ideas to this conversation about improving education for our children,” said Allen. “We will continue working with community partners to identify additional ways to engage students, parents, teachers and other stakeholders to ensure everyone has an opportunity to share their hopes and aspirations for our schools and our students.”

The commission has selected One Voice, a Jackson-based nonprofit organization, to lead the canvassing effort. One Voice has more than 10 years of experience working with communities on data collection and analysis, policy advocacy, and coalition building.

Jackson residents can monitor progress and share thoughts, ideas and feedback on the Better Together website at <http://bettertogether.formississippi.org> or social media platforms—[Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#). Applications for canvassing positions are currently being accepted on the One Voice website at <http://onevoicems.org/get-involved>. Residents also can share questions and concerns by emailing the commission at [bettertogether@formississippi.org](mailto:bettertogether@formississippi.org).

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#### **About the Better Together Commission**

The Better Together Commission is a 15-member body of volunteers charged with engaging the community and conducting a study of the educational ecosystem to ensure children’s success in the Jackson Public School District (JPS). Throughout this year, the Commission will be working with the community to create a plan that ensures the academic success of all JPS students.