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Nonprofits Join Forces to Expedite Access to Diverse and Affordable Children's Books

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Supports the Initiative with
$1 Million Grant to First Book

WASHINGTON, D.C. (October 18, 2022) – Twenty-seven nonprofits and membership organizations from across the U.S. are joining forces to tackle a common challenge that has impeded children's literacy for decades: the lack of high-quality, affordable children's books by and about diverse races and cultures. Among its strategies, the Diverse Books for All Coalition, which includes many of the nation's largest nonprofits that distribute books to children, will leverage the power of aggregate buying to influence the availability and pricing of diverse children's books. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has awarded First Book, the nonprofit social enterprise that organized the coalition, with a $1 million, 18-month grant to support the initiative.

"Our respective organizations have worked for years to increase access to diverse books that celebrate the cultural richness of our country, but the number of children's books that convey authentic, lived stories and images of diverse populations are too rare – and too expensive," said Kyle Zimmer, president and CEO of First Book. "The lack of diversity not only impedes children's literacy outcomes, it impacts their sense of self-worth, and limits our nation's ability to raise the next generation with a deeper understanding of how to live, learn, and flourish in an increasingly diverse society."

According to the Cooperative Children's Book Center, in the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, out of 3,183 children's books published in the U.S. in 2021, only 436 were about Blacks/African Americans; 337 were about Asians; 234 were about Latinos; 62 were about Indigenous people; 21 were about those of Arab descent; and 6 were about Pacific Islanders. Books written by authors from diverse races and cultures were similarly under-represented: out of the 3,183 children's books published in the U.S., only 307 were written by Black/African American authors; 463 were by Asian authors; 311 were written by Latinos; 47 were written by Indigenous authors; 21 were written by those of Arab descent; and 8 were written by Pacific Islanders.

To support educational and racial equity, the Diverse Books for All Coalition is developing a plan for collective action designed to double the number of affordable, quality children's books by and about diverse cultures and races over the next five years. The group is focused on unifying the market of nonprofits and membership organizations serving children in low-income communities; framing a narrative to promote the importance of diverse books; providing educators with support and resources to advocate for diverse books; and ensuring that parents/caregivers have a voice in defining and promoting diverse books.

Founding members of the Coalition are: First Book, American Academy of Pediatrics-CA3, Book Harvest, Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, Heart of America, Home Grown, Jumpstart, The Leaders Readers Network, National Association for the Education of Young Children, National Black Child Development Institute, ParentChild+, Parents as Teachers, Raising a Reader, Reach Out and Read, Inc., Reach Out and Read Greater New York, Reach Out and Read Rhode Island, Read On Arizona, Reading Is Fundamental, Room to Read, Save the Children, Start Early, The American Federation of Teachers, The Patterson Foundation, Too Small to Fail, UnidosUS, We Need Diverse Books, and Zero to Three.

About the Diverse Books for All Coalition

The Diverse Books for All Coalition is a national consortium of nonprofits and membership organizations working together to increase access to affordable, diverse children's books. The consortium's priorities include collective purchasing, narrative/message development to underscore the value and benefits of diverse and inclusive representation in books, and resource development to enable educators and parents/caregivers to transform how children, educators and communities access, engage with and benefit from diverse books.

About First Book

Founded in Washington, D.C., in 1992 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit social enterprise, First Book is a leader in the educational equity field. Over its 30-year history, First Book has distributed more than 225 million books and educational resources, with a retail value of more than $2 billion. First Book believes education offers children in need the best path out of poverty. First Book breaks down barriers to quality education by providing its Network of more than 550,000 registered teachers, librarians, after school program leaders, and others serving children in need with millions of free and affordable new, high-quality books, educational resources, and basic needs items through the award-winning First Book Marketplace nonprofit eCommerce site. The First Book Network comprises the largest and fastest-growing community of formal and informal educators serving children in need.

First Book also expands the breadth and depth of the education field through a family of social enterprises, including First Book Research & Insights, its proprietary research initiative, and the First Book Accelerator, which brings best-in-class research-based strategies to the classroom via relevant, usable educator resources. First Book Impact Funds target support to areas of need, such as rural communities or increasing diversity in children's books. For more information about First Book, please visit www.firstbook.org.

About the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal innovator and entrepreneur Will Keith Kellogg, is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work and life. The Kellogg Foundation is based in Battle Creek, Michigan, and works throughout the United States and internationally, as well as with sovereign tribes. For more information, visit www.wkkf.org.