

Title: "Policy Matters: Tesfai Mengesha"

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Policy Matters: Tesfai Mengesha

By Tesfai Mengesha

Later this year, Canadians will vote in the 43rd federal election. Many non-profit organizations, networks, and coalitions see elections as a critical opportunity to raise relevant public policy issues. Recently, the rules for charities engaging in public policy have become a prominent source of debate and discussion in government and the sector. As we countdown to the next election, The Philanthropist will be asking non-profit leaders what public policy issues are top of mind for them.

Name and organization: Tesfai Mengesha, Success Beyond Limits

What current election issues might impact your work?

At Success Beyond Limits we aim to address the complex and interconnected systemic issues which coalesce to produce an opportunity gap in education for youth. The opportunity gap is the disparities in educational access, attainment, achievement and outcomes between groups of students, particularly for racialized and marginalized young people. Over the last decade, our work has demonstrated that access to adequate and affordable housing, meaningful and decent employment, accessible transportation, and a disproportionately punitive criminal justice system are all connected to success in education.

What issues would you like to bring more attention to in the election?

Often policy interventions designed to address disparities in educational achievement and outcomes focus solely on the classroom and school, rather than root causes. These longstanding disparities in education persist as a result of policy decisions which largely do not account for the interconnected nature of the opportunity gap. Any effective effort to address these inequities require a coordinated and dedicated responses across ministries and levels of government. For example, recently in Ontario a Special Advisor to the Premier was appointed to work across ministries on the implementation of Community Hubs, which looked at repurposing schools as holistic sites of integrated service delivery. An intervention of this type scaled to the national level is one example of what a coordinated and interconnected intervention might look like, which can get us thinking of more multifaceted solutions that might have the potential to address structural root causes.

Where can we learn more about these issues?

Inequality Explained: The hidden gaps in Canada's education system

CITY – An Integrated System of Care: An Introduction