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LDF Calls on Florida Sheriffs and School Districts to Refuse to Arm School Staff

Also Urges Best Practices to Comply with Federal Anti-Discrimination Laws

Following the tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in February, Florida lawmakers passed a bill that allows armed staff in public schools. The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) sent a letter to Florida’s sheriffs, school boards, and superintendents urging them to implement the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act in a way that complies with federal anti-discrimination laws and attempts to prevent unintended, adverse effects for students, educators, and communities. It is essential, for example, that the Act does not result in law enforcement supplanting the role of educators in addressing student misbehavior, which would funnel students – particularly students of color – into the school-to-prison pipeline.

LDF’s letter raises the alarm about several provisions of the Act, including those allowing school employees to carry guns; requiring the placement of armed personnel in every school; mandating that educators “consult with” law enforcement whenever a student commits more than one misdemeanor or “exhibits a pattern of behavior . . . that would pose a threat to school safety;” and creating an anonymous reporting mechanism without proper due process protections. The letter offers specific guidance to Florida sheriffs and school districts so that they may implement the Act in a manner that promotes the safety and wellbeing of all students and educators, while also protecting against unintentional, and potentially unlawful, consequences.

Read the full letter here.

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation’s first civil and human rights law organization and has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.