Today, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) sent a letter to MaryEllen Elia, New York State Commissioner of Education, calling on her to remove Carl Paladino from his position on the Buffalo School Board in the wake of his racially-charged comments about President and Mrs. Obama. In calling for his swift removal from the Board, LDF notes:

“Anyone who casually espouses such noxious and dehumanizing views is unfit to oversee the education of school children, especially in Buffalo, where most students are Black and the public schools are as segregated today as they were in the 1970s, despite a federal court desegregation order. According to The Buffalo News, approximately 70 percent of public schools in the city are now segregated.

“Mr. Paladino’s race-based assessment of President and Mrs. Obama’s qualifications cannot be reconciled with his mandate to ensure that all of the children of Buffalo receive a quality education. To the contrary, Mr. Paladino’s racist tropes can and will have an especially insidious impact on Buffalo’s children of color, who will be expected to accept that someone who is entrusted with their educational development links blackness to inhumanity.

“As of this writing, Mr. Paladino has refused to resign from the Board in the face of a groundswell of New York State residents, including many from Buffalo, demanding his resignation or removal. It is incumbent upon you, therefore, to remove him, as N.Y. Educ. Law. §§ 306, 1706, and 2559 empower you to do. If Mr. Paladino is not immediately held accountable for his conduct, and purged from the Board, he will have put the lie to the Buffalo School District’s mission to “ensure that every student will have the confidence, knowledge . . . character and hope” necessary to succeed, and tainted the credibility and respectability of the Board as a whole.”

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.