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Petition Filed Calling for Removal of Carl Paladino from Buffalo School Board

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Perkins Coie Filed on Behalf of Buffalo Parent Teacher Organization, Buffalo Branch NAACP

NEW YORK, NY (January 31, 2017) -- The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) and lawyers from Perkins Coie LLP submitted a petition to MaryEllen Elia, New York State Commissioner of Education, on behalf of the Buffalo Parent Teacher Organization and the Buffalo Branch NAACP, to remove Carl Paladino from the Board of Education of the Buffalo School District. The petition comes in the wake of racially-charged comments Mr. Paladino made about President and Mrs. Obama in December of 2016, following a long history of actions and comments with racial animus.

Carl Paladino’s history of racially inflammatory actions and statements, as well as his disclosure of confidential information from Board executive sessions, constitute intentional and willful violations and/or neglect of his duty to properly execute his responsibilities as a member of the Buffalo Board of Education, necessitating his removal. If Mr. Paladino is not removed from the Buffalo Board of Education, it cannot properly perform its responsibilities and ensure that each student will have the confidence and hope that is required for him or her to succeed.

“The children of Buffalo deserve far better than Carl Paladino. Every day he continues to be on the Board of Education is an affront to the community and the values of diversity, inclusion, and opportunity in public education,” noted Lawrence Scott of the Buffalo Parent Teacher Organization.

“As a member of the Buffalo Board of Education, Carl Paladino is bound to safeguard the rights of all children, including children of color, and promote a safe and healthy environment in which Buffalo’s students of color are treated respectfully by everyone in the community,” said Reverend Mark Blue, President of the Buffalo Branch NAACP.
“Carl Paladino’s espousal of racist views and willful disclosure of confidential information raises serious concerns about his fitness to oversee the education of Buffalo’s public school students. A person who publicly denigrates the humanity of Black people cannot also effectively direct their education,” added Raymond Audain, Senior Counsel for LDF.

“Carl Paladino’s long history of incendiary remarks and abhorrent behavior make it inappropriate for him to remain responsible for the education of any student,” stated Perkins Coie partner Richard Ross. “As a member of the Buffalo School Board, he has an obligation to be a role model and to demonstrate respect for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or background. His views and behavior are inconsistent with the 21st century and he should not be involved in any capacity with educational decisions.”

Mr. Paladino has refused to resign from the Buffalo Board of Education despite increasing outrage over his comments, a growing chorus of community leaders condemning his actions, and a groundswell of New York State residents, from Buffalo to Albany, calling for his immediate resignation. Buffalonians mobilized for protests in Niagara Square, and the Buffalo School Board passed a resolution in December calling for Paladino’s resignation within 24 hours. “Given the groundswell of public opposition and the utter lack of faith or trust in Mr. Paladino by the parents and teachers of Buffalo, as well as his fellow Board members, the choice for Commissioner Elia is clear: the swift removal of Carl Paladino from the Buffalo Board of Education,” concluded Audain.

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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.

Founded in 1912, Perkins Coie LLP has more than 1,000 lawyers in 19 offices across the United States and Asia. The firm provides a full array of corporate, commercial litigation and intellectual property legal services to a broad range of clients, from FORTUNE 50 corporations to emerging growth startups, as well as public and not-for-profit organizations. Perkins Coie believes that it is important to provide top-quality legal service on a pro bono basis to those who need it most. Through our pro bono legal work and other public and community service efforts, we continue to change lives and transform our communities.