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Contact: David Jacobs
212-965-2255 / djacobs@naacpldf.org

NAACP Legal Defense Fund Statement on Removal of Carl Paladino from Buffalo School Board

Following sustained efforts by the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and Perkins Coie LLP, New York State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia today announced that Carl Paladino has been removed from the Board of Education of the Buffalo School District. Paladino, known for his racially inflammatory statements and actions – including comments suggesting he wanted President Obama to “[catch] mad cow disease,” and Michelle Obama “to return to being a male and let loose in the outback of Zimbabwe” – was removed for willfully violating the General Municipal Law.

“In the days following the white nationalist extremism in Charlottesville, Virginia, we’ve called upon leadership at the federal, state, and local level to not simply condemn white supremacy, but to take action to combat it,” said Raymond Audain, Senior Counsel at LDF. “I applaud today’s decision by Commissioner Elia, which helps ensure Buffalo will create an educational atmosphere devoid of bigotry. School boards must be comprised of those who understand the importance of diversity and equal opportunity in education, not those who deny the humanity of people of color.”

“Today’s decision is a direct result of the Buffalo Parent Teacher Organization’s and the Buffalo NAACP’s continued commitment to ensuring that the children of Buffalo are educated in an environment that is purged of racism,” added Audain. “Their persistent efforts should serve as a model to communities nationwide.”

Richard Ross, Partner at Perkins Coie, made the following comment: “We are pleased with Carl Paladino’s removal from the Board of Education of the Buffalo School District. The real victors, however, are all the children of the Buffalo School District, who no longer have to be subject to Mr. Paladino’s racists and homophobic rants. They can now commence the process of re-establishing trust and faith in the leadership of the Buffalo School District.”

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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.