



**For Immediate Release**  
**Wednesday, March 10, 2021**

**LDF Media**  
212-965-2200 / [media@naacpldf.org](mailto:media@naacpldf.org)

**LDF and 11 Local Organizations Urge Pinellas County School Board to Adopt Common-Sense Revisions to its Proposed Agreement with 13 Local Law Enforcement Agencies**

Today, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) joined a coalition of 11 local organizations and the former mayor of Tarpon Springs, Florida, David O. Archie, in a letter to the Pinellas County School Board, requesting revisions to a proposed agreement between the school district and 13 local law enforcement agencies. LDF previously requested the school board to adopt these revisions on behalf of Black students attending Pinellas County schools to preserve students' privacy and due process rights and to ensure that law enforcement officers do not replace educators in addressing childhood misbehavior.

“Turning police into school disciplinarians increases student anxiety, creates alienation and distrust, diminishes students' faith in the legitimacy of the authority of school staff, and can trigger, rather than prevent, misbehavior,” stated the organizations in their letter to the school board. “Furthermore, harsh disciplinary practices, such as school-based arrests, increase the risk that students will fail a grade, drop out of school, and become entangled in the criminal justice system.”

Research shows that Black students do not misbehave more than white students. Yet, there were more than twice as many arrests of Black students than white students during the 2019-20 school year even though there are nearly three times as many white students in the Pinellas County School District. As of 2019, the district was the eighth-largest school district in Florida and the 27<sup>th</sup>-largest school district in the country.

The organizations also urged the school board to give parents, students, and community members a meaningful opportunity to comment on the proposed agreement between the school district and law enforcement agencies. In a separate letter, the League of Women Voters of North Pinellas County and the League of Women Voters of the St. Petersburg Area echoed this sentiment.

“It is vital that the district purposefully demonstrate efforts to engage the community as a means to not only better understand the impact of law enforcement in its schools, but to build trust among neighborhoods and families that have been negatively impacted by representatives of law enforcement agencies,” the League chapters wrote.

Both local branches of the NAACP will be hosting a virtual Community Conversation with Pinellas County school officials this Thursday, March 11, at 7 p.m., to allow community members to learn more. In addition, Teaching for the Culture, the Sunshine Education Coalition, and NAACP St. Petersburg Branch #5130 will be hosting a virtual town hall to enable community members to ask questions and discuss the issue on Saturday, March 20, at 4 p.m.

LDF and local counsel Butler Weihmuller Katz Craig represent thousands of Black schoolchildren and their parents in longstanding efforts to desegregate and ensure educational equity in Pinellas County schools. For decades, these families have taken the lead in advancing solutions that will improve public education for all Pinellas County students.

LDF joined the following organizations in calling for revisions:

Pinellas County Council PTA

Faith and Action for Strength Together (FAST)

AFSCME Florida

Allendale United Methodist Church

League of United Latin American Citizens Pinellas Council #7069

NAACP Clearwater/Upper Pinellas County Branch No. 5069

NAACP St. Petersburg Branch #5130

Puerto Rico Connect

Teaching for the Culture

Sunshine Education Coalition

One City Chorus

###

*Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation's first civil and human rights law organization. LDF 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. Follow LDF on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).*