

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 13, 2021

Contacts:

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Michelle Boykins, mboykins@advancingjustice-aaajc.org, 202.604.1760

NAACP Legal Defense Fund

media@naacpldf.org

LatinoJustice PRLDEF

Elianne Ramos, eramos@latinojustice.org, 212.739.7513

Arnold & Porter

Issara Baumann, issara.baumann@arnoldporter.com, 202.942.6682

Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC, NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and LatinoJustice PRLDEF Lead Legal Team in Battle Over Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology Admissions Policies

Civil Rights Groups File To Submit Amicus Brief on Behalf of TJ Alumni for Racial Justice, NAKASEC VA, CASA VA, Virginia State Conference of the NAACP, and Hispanic Federation

Washington, DC — Today, civil rights groups Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC (Advancing Justice-AAJC), NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), and LatinoJustice PRLDEF, together with law firm Arnold & Porter, filed a motion to submit an [amicus brief](#) in support of equitable access to Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST) in the case *Coalition for TJ v. Fairfax County School Board*.

“As a leading Asian American civil rights organization, we are filing an amicus brief in this case in support of policies that ensure equitable access to education for communities of color, a sentiment [overwhelmingly supported by the Asian American community](#),” said Niyati Shah, Advancing Justice – AAJC’s Director of Litigation. “For too many students, the path to potential admission at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology has been littered with barriers and mired in a long history of inequity.”

The groups will serve as counsel for TJ Alumni for Racial Justice (TJARJ), NAKASEC VA, CASA VA, Virginia State Conference of the NAACP, and Hispanic Federation as

amici curiae in support of new policies designed to promote access and reject policies that further systemic racism and favor students who come from more affluent backgrounds.

“We must work together to ensure that all hardworking students – regardless of race or socioeconomic status – have a fair chance to get into celebrated schools like the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology,” said Michael N. Turnage Young, Senior Counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. “LDF is proud to stand with proposed amici NAKASEC Virginia, Casa Virginia, the Virginia NAACP, Hispanic Federation, and TJ Alumni for Racial Justice in supporting schools that strive to remove barriers to equal educational opportunity. Schools working to advance equality should be commended, not targeted with cynical attempts to pit communities of color against each other.”

According to the brief, the student body at TJHSST is woefully lacking the diverse makeup of the students within the communities it serves. Currently, the student body of TJHSST is only 1.72% Black and 2.6% Latinx, with admissions of Black and Latinx students over the past seven years barely clearing 2 and 3 percent. And even within the Asian American community, there is dearth of diversity as English Language Learners and economically disadvantaged students are severely under-represented.

“It’s a travesty of justice that Latino and Black students, combined, constitute a meager 4.2% of TJHSST’s student population. This is the lowest enrollment percentage of any specialized high school that LatinoJustice has encountered since seeking to defend proposed admissions reforms to advance greater racial, ethnic and socioeconomic diversity in these elite publicly funded high schools. We are pleased that our amicus brief contextualizes the history of racial segregation and discrimination against Black and Latino students and exposes the inequities of a test-centric admissions plan” said Jose Perez, Deputy General Counsel, of LatinoJustice PRLDEF.

"Labeling the proposed educational reform efforts aimed at furthering racial and economic equity as “anti-Asian” misses the mark and trivializes the very real racial biases and structural racism that our communities face," said Sookyung Oh, Director of NAKASEC Virginia. "Research strongly and clearly demonstrates the benefits of diversity in education."

Advancing Justice – AAJC, NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and LatinoJustice PRLDEF stand for racial equity in education and look forward to representing these groups who are encouraging progress to promote access and expand educational opportunities for all communities of color.

"Black and Latinx students have been shut out of TJ for a generation," said TJARJ Board member Daniel Morales. "It's time to make room at the table for talented students of every race."

Arnold & Porter partner Kristen Olvera Riemenschneider and Associate Elizabeth Denning said: “As alumni of TJHSST, we are keenly aware of the benefits that a top-

notch STEM education confer. It is important to remember that TJHSST is a public school. The opportunities it creates should be available to all children, not just those with economic or socially advantaged backgrounds.”

###

The mission of Asian Americans Advancing Justice / AAJC is to advance civil and human rights for Asian Americans. Advancing Justice / AAJC is a national 501 (c)(3) nonprofit founded in 1991 in Washington, D.C. Advancing Justice / AAJC is the voice for the Asian American community – the fastest-growing population in the U.S. – fighting for our civil rights through education, litigation, and public policy advocacy. www.advancingjustice-aaajc.org.

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](#).

LatinoJustice PRLDEF works to create a more just society by using and challenging the rule of law to secure transformative, equitable and accessible justice, by empowering our community and by fostering leadership through advocacy and education. For more than 40 years, LatinoJustice PRLDEF has acted as an advocate against injustices throughout New York and beyond. To learn more about LatinoJustice, visit www.latinojustice.org.

Arnold & Porter has nearly 1,000 lawyers practicing in 13 offices around the globe, Arnold & Porter serves clients across 40 distinct practice areas. The firm offers 100 years of renowned regulatory expertise, sophisticated litigation and transactional practices, and leading multidisciplinary offerings in the life sciences and financial services industries.