



**For Immediate Release**  
**February 5, 2020**

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### **LDF Files Public Records Request on Behalf of De'Andre Arnold and Family**

Today, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) filed a public records request with Barbers Hill Independent School District (BHISD) Superintendent Greg Poole on behalf of Mr. De'Andre Arnold and his family. This request, which is being made pursuant to the Texas Public Information Act, seeks records that will provide more information on the district's construction and enforcement of its dress and grooming code, following its decision to enforce punitive measures against Mr. Arnold if he did not cut his locs.\*

"We have retained the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) to represent our family in the investigation of legal claims stemming from the targeting of our son, De'Andre, because of his natural hair," Sandy and David Arnold said. "LDF has a rich history of advocating for equal rights for Black students, and we know that they will work tirelessly on De'Andre's behalf to help end natural hair discrimination in his school setting. While it is extremely unfortunate that our son has had to endure this targeted bias, we are hopeful that our efforts will create lasting change in school policies and practices in Texas."

Mr. Arnold, an 18-year-old high school senior at Barbers Hill High School in Mont Belvieu, Texas, has been growing his locs since he was in seventh grade. This school year, BHISD officials informed Mr. Arnold that his locs violated the district's dress code and grooming policy – and indicated that he must cut them or face disciplinary measures, including suspension and a ban from school activities, including graduation. Mr. Arnold refuses to cut his locs, which he emphasizes are an integral part of his identity and heritage.

"Mr. Arnold's experience with racial hair discrimination is reprehensible and, regrettably, not uncommon. Over the years, LDF has worked repeatedly on behalf of students who have been subject to racially discriminatory dress and grooming policies and biased disciplinary actions, and we are firmly committed to doing the same for Mr. Arnold," said Janai Nelson, LDF's Associate Director-Counsel. "Black hair discrimination, in schools and in the workplace, has severe ramifications and is corrosive at its core. It infringes on the right of Black people to exist as their full selves – and frequently results in unjust consequences that limit their educational or employment opportunities, as Mr. Arnold's experience aptly illustrates. We will work diligently to ensure that the

district is held accountable for developing and implementing biased policies – and that it engages in reforms needed to fully address the damage it has caused.”

LDF’s request seeks copies of various records that may provide further insight into the district’s dress code policy. These documents include comprehensive parent, student, and employee communications about the dress code, its development, and any allowed exemptions; records of dress code enforcement and disciplinary actions disaggregated by race and gender; and any documents that outline district investigations of racial bias or hair bias, among others.

“School dress codes that profile, single out, or unfairly target Black students for wearing their natural hair are proxies for racial discrimination,” said Patricia Okonta, LDF’s Skadden Fellow. “Indeed, discriminatory hair policies perpetuate harmful stereotypes about African Americans, advancing a white supremacist myth of what is an acceptable appearance for Black students. This inherently threatens Black students’ mobility and success. We look forward to working on the Arnold family’s behalf to ensure that policies like these are no longer a part of the Texas school system.”

To learn more about Black hair discrimination and bias, please visit LDF’s hair discrimination web page.

All media inquiries related to the Arnold family should be directed to Phoebe Plagens, LDF’s Director of Media Relations. Ms. Plagens can be reached at [pplagens@naacpldf.org](mailto:pplagens@naacpldf.org).

\* Terminology note: LDF uses the term “loc(s)” or “lock(s)” to refer to what some refer to as “dreadlock(s).” The latter term derives from a description of Black hair locs as “dreadful” and “was used by English slave traders to refer to Africans’ hair, which had probably loc’d naturally on its own during the Middle Passage.” See Brown White, S., *Releasing the Pursuit of Bouncin’ and Behavin’ Hair: Natural Hair as an Afrocentric Feminist Aesthetic for Beauty*, 1 Int’l J. Media & Cultural Pol. 295, 965 n.3 (2005).

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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. 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.*

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