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LDF Issues Statement on New Consent Decree in Chambers County Desegregation Case

Yesterday, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF), co-counsel Stanley F. Gray of Gray, Langford, Sapp, McGowan, Gray, Gray & Nathanson, the Educational Opportunities Section of the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), and the Chambers County Board of Education in Lafayette, Alabama, [filed](#) a proposed consent decree for court approval, outlining several measures to effectively desegregate the school district. The new consent decree in the longstanding case, *Anthony T. Lee et al v. Chambers County Board of Education*, follows negotiations between the District; the DOJ; and the private plaintiff class, who are Black students and parents in the District. If the federal district court approves, the terms of the consent decree will immediately take effect.

“We are pleased to arrive at a consent decree that addresses the many concerns our clients raised as key to ensuring the effectiveness of the desegregation process in Chambers County,” said LDF Education Special Counsel GeDá Jones Herbert. “It was particularly important that Black students in the district are afforded equal and high-quality educational opportunities in safe and modern facilities. Keeping LaFayette High School open until construction of the new consolidated school begins and requiring that the District announce the neutral location where it intends to construct the new school by the end of the 2022-2023 school year were important terms for our clients. We are also happy to report that current faculty and other school staff in the District will retain their jobs regardless of closures or consolidations, and that community members will continue to have their voices heard as the process continues. Under the consent decree, the District must establish a Desegregation Advisory Committee, comprised of parents and students, who will have regular opportunities to share their feedback and input on the implementation of the plan — alongside our own annual monitoring of its compliance.”

“The detailed desegregation measures as outlined in this consent decree are a promising development in this case, which stems from an earlier desegregation order in 1993,” said Amber Koonce, Fried Frank Fellow at LDF. “Under this consent decree, the District must comply with a number of mandates specifically geared toward improving the quality of and access to education for Black students in Chambers County—from committing to a plan for recruiting and retaining Black teachers, to closely monitoring the bus routes of students, tracking access to educational opportunities, and reporting the dispensation of discipline so that any unequal treatment based on race can be identified and ultimately rooted out.”

“This agreement reflects the perseverance of the plaintiffs in demanding equal, quality education for African American children and their families in Chambers County,” said co-counsel Stanley F. Gray.

Along with the establishment of a Desegregation Advisory Committee and outlining a specific, time-bound plan for consolidating current Lafayette High School and Valley High School students at a new facility, the consent decree requires that the District open a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) academy at the current Eastside Elementary School for kindergarten to eighth grade, beginning in the next school year, and immediately start recruiting across the district to enroll a desegregated student population. The District has also agreed to:

- Widely share and directly provide parents with information about all extracurricular activities offered at each school in the District at the start of every school year
- Ensure all students have access to the District's academic offerings and special programs, including the gifted and talented program
- Regularly track and evaluate the disciplinary practices of each school in the District to ensure they are free of racial discrimination
- Retain technical assistance to improve disciplinary policies and practices, including adding Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Justice and revising the Code of Conduct with input from students and families.

Read the [full proposed consent order](#).

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Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF) is the nation's first civil rights law organization. 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 Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that 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.