

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

**Concerned Parents and Students Urge Carroll Independent School District in Southlake, Texas to Enter Good-Faith Negotiations with Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights to Resolve Finding of Civil Rights Violations.**

Today, Cultural & Racial Equity for Every Dragon (CREED) and the Southlake Anti-Racism Coalition (SARC) submitted an [open letter](#) to the Carroll Independent School District (CISD), in Southlake, Texas, urging it to negotiate in good faith with the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR) to remedy serious civil rights violations. Earlier this week, OCR informed our clients that it has initiated negotiations after years-long investigations in four complaints. OCR only initiates negotiations in complaints for which it found that the school district violated the complainant’s civil rights.

CREED is a group of parents of Black Southlake students who are concerned about the emotional and mental harms inflicted on students by CISD’s hostile environment, and SARC is a group of current and former CISD students who have first-hand experience with the harmful consequences of this hostile environment. Members of CREED and SARC filed administrative complaints with OCR in February 2021, chronicling instances of race-based and gender-based discrimination and harassment. The complaints also detailed how CISD officials have known for years that students of color and LGBTQIA+ students faced hostile environments in their schools, preventing them from fully participating in educational programs and school activities. This week’s announcement, after a three-year independent investigation into violations of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, signifies that OCR made a factual finding that students in the District are indeed facing gender-based and race-based discrimination. OCR’s investigative findings confirm the failure of CISD to take the necessary steps to protect students of color and LGBTQIA+ students.

“CREED is gratified that OCR, after a multi-year investigation, found that CISD violated the civil rights of its students and invited CISD to negotiate a resolution. We urge CISD to negotiate in good faith and implement the significant policy changes needed to ensure all students are welcomed and supported at school,” said Pamela Francis, a member of CREED.

“I think it’s good Carroll may be pushed to finally do something for its students of color. Just wish it happened while I was there” said Terrance Jones, complainant.

“After three years of eagerly awaiting, SARC is grateful that the egregious civil rights violations students face in Carroll ISD are finally being officially recognized as such by the Office of Civil Rights” said Raven Rolle, a member of SARC. “We look forward to good faith negotiations with the school district to finally rectify these injustices and cultivate a climate truly welcoming of all Dragons, regardless of race, gender, religion or sexual identity.”

“As a former CISD student, I experienced homophobic harassment and bullying. When I turned to school officials for help, they failed to protect me.” said Mia Mariani, a member of SARC. “I appreciate OCR’s investigation and its acknowledgment of CISD’s failure to safeguard me and fellow queer students. My hope is for CISD to cooperate with OCR’s negotiation process and ensure that all students, including queer and non-binary students, feel safe at school. It’s essential that policies are in place to shield them from the kind of harassment I experienced.”

CREED and SARC members alerted District officials to multiple instances of racist and homophobic slurs and harassment but were met with indifference from the officials, leading to yet additional instances of slurs, threats, and demeaning treatment. Throughout OCR’s investigation, CISD denied the existence of this hostile environment or any race-based or gender-based discrimination, instead revising District policies that reduced protections for vulnerable students. Today’s open letter from CREED and SARC urges CISD to participate in the 90-day OCR negotiation process in good faith to ensure that all students—regardless of their race, gender identity, or sexual orientation—can receive quality, public education in a safe and welcoming environment. While it is rare for an educational institution to refuse to negotiate, OCR has a variety of enforcement tools to compel compliance with federal civil rights laws, including the withholding of federal funds from school districts that refuse to engage in remediation.

“After three long years, we are pleased to see that OCR has recognized the longstanding civil rights violations in Carroll ISD schools. Black, brown, and LGBTQIA+ students deserve schools that not only prevent and respond to harassment, but that create a safe and supportive environment for all students. As the 90-day resolution negotiation period begins, we are hopeful that CISD and OCR will work to adopt the policy changes that CREED, SARC, and Southlake families have demanded for years,” said LDF Assistant Counsel Katrina Feldkamp.

“We are pleased that after three years, OCR has initiated negotiations with CISD regarding CISD’s egregious failure to meet its legal duty to address harassment of students on the basis of their race and gender. All students deserve a safe place to go to school, and, today, the students of Southlake are one step closer to that goal,” said Arnold & Porter Partner Raqiyyah Pippins.

Read the open letter [here](#).

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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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Page 2 of 3

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