



LAWYERS' COMMITTEE
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Civil Rights Groups' Statement on Finding by U.S. Attorney that Boston Latin School Violated Federal Civil Rights Law

Groups Behind Federal Complaint Urge City to Use Agreement to Improve the Racial Climate of Every Boston School

Boston, MA: Today, U.S. Attorney Carmen Ortiz found that Boston Latin School (BLS) violated federal civil rights law in responding to school-based racial harassment and announced a resolution agreement with Boston Public Schools (BPS) to improve the racial climate of the school.

The U.S. Department of Justice found BLS violated Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the same law it has used to litigate scores of school desegregation cases. It is not often that Title IV is violated so far from the South. That the Department of Justice brought it to bear here validates the concerns first raised by students and families at Latin. This violation reminds us that we, as a city and nation, still have work to do to ensure that all students are safe and welcome to pursue their equal right to education.

We have always asserted that Latin is not the only school in Greater Boston or the Commonwealth to have issues with racial isolation and racial hostility. However, the very public discussion of harassment at BLS has raised significant awareness of these issues across Boston's public, charter, and private schools. And the U.S. Attorney's findings should put every school system in the Commonwealth on notice of their federal duty to address racial harassment. Transparency, accountability and communication with parents, community stakeholders and our elected and appointed officials is absolutely critical to making sure that our schools are equitable and accepting of every student, no matter their race, color, gender or creed.

The start of the 2016–2017 academic year brings great potential and a new beginning for the students returning to BLS, and it provides an opportunity for the City of Boston, BPS, and BLS to set the example for the nation. We will monitor implementation of the resolution agreement with the expectation that BPS and the City of Boston will use it to address these systemic issues across the district. Boston should be sending a clear message that we know how to educate every child and provide unfettered access to all at our most prestigious academic institutions.

We also note that Boston cannot fully address the harms of racial isolation until it has established an exam school admissions policy that enables BLS to better reflect the diversity of our city. We urge the City of Boston to follow the mandate of its Opportunity and Achievement Gap Policy and expeditiously review its exam school admissions policy.

Contact:

Michael Curry, **Boston Branch of the NAACP:** 617-427-9494

Rahsaan Hall, **ACLU of Massachusetts:** 617-482-3170 ext. 394

Kim Janey, **Massachusetts Advocates for Children:** 617-357-8431 ext. 3227

Matt Cregor, **Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice:** 617-988-0609