

April 24, 2023

Office for Civil Rights
Dallas Office
U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights
Renaissance Tower
1201 Elm St., Suite 1000
Dallas, TX 75270

Sent via email: OCR.Dallas@ed.gov

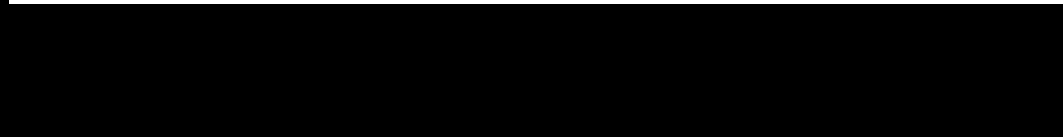
To whom it may concern:

We write to you with an urgent request to exercise your authority pursuant to Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (“Title VI”), to investigate and/or

The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana’s desegregation order of 1978 remained in place until 2011. In 2011, the parties involved in the 1978 Desegregation Order entered into a settlement agreement to bring the litigation to a close. One of the provisions of this settlement agreement required the School Board to ensure that school closures would not disproportionately affect one racial group as opposed to another racial group.⁴ The settlement agreement also required that the School Board provide public notice if the Attendance Zones established in the Consent Order⁵ were amended.⁶ Finally, the settlement agreement required the School Board to issue a public notice not less than 30 days prior to considering any school closure, with opportunities for community meetings where all members of the community could be heard.⁷ This settlement agreement ended in 2014.

During the 2017-2018 school year, only a few years after the 1978 Desegregation Order had ended, the Jefferson Parish School Board hired consultants to review their facilities, infrastructure, and overall efficiency of the school district, with the goal of consolidating schools and changing existing attendance zones. Due to COVID-19, this plan was placed on hold, but in 2023, the School Board hired the same consultants to develop an “Infrastructure & Efficiency Plan.”⁸ Over the course of two months, the consultants developed a plan recommending the closure of eight schools, the consolidation of multiple campuses, and the changing of attendance zones in 2023,

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814	554	68%	75	9%	136	17%
376	154	41%	52	14%	159	42%

the April 5, 2023 School Board Meeting; if such procedures exist, it is unclear whether the School Board and District complied with them.

Today, on April 24, 2023, the Jefferson Parish School Board will vote on proposed changes to attendance zone maps to correspond with the school closures. To the best of counsel's knowledge, the only public notice available on the school district's website is in English.¹¹ A copy of the agenda for the meeting is enclosed [here](#).

The history of segregation of students in Jefferson Parish and the history of discrimination in the School Board's and School District's funding of schools, coupled with the new School Closure Plan that disproportionately impacts Black and Latino students, is gravely concerning to families and students in Jefferson Parish. So too is the School Board's and School District's failure to ensure transparency through appropriate language access for these proceedings. Accordingly, the Southern Poverty Law Center respectfully asks the Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education to initiate a compliance review of the Jefferson Parish School Board and School District to determine whether its actions violate Title VI's prohibitions against discrimination based on race and national origin. Additionally, the SPLC submits this letter as a complaint against the Jefferson Parish School Board and School District for the aforementioned violations of Title VI.

We are in the process of gathering more information as it becomes available.