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ADVISORY/ Settlement Reached in Lawsuit Between Plaintiffs Representing Black and Latino Students and the Kern High School District

WHAT: The plaintiffs in a lawsuit fighting for Latino and African American students in Kern County will share details of a settlement reached with the Kern High School District involving historic changes in school discipline policies that disproportionately impact students of color.

WHEN/WHERE: 10:00 a.m. – Wednesday, July 26, 2017
Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance
615 California Ave, Bakersfield, Calif.

WHO: Cynthia Rice, California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA)
Kip Hustace, MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund)
Lyndsi Andreas, Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance, Inc. (GBLA)
Eva Paterson, Equal Justice Society (EJS)
Dolores Huerta, Dolores Huerta Foundation
Joey Williams, Faith in Kern

The plaintiffs filed a lawsuit against the Kern High School District (KHSD) on October 9, 2014. The Kern High School District Board of Trustees approved a settlement with the plaintiffs on July 24, 2017.

Under the terms of the settlement, KHSD will be required to work with a group of four outside experts to address disproportionate discipline and transfers of Black and Latino students by implementing new policies and procedures and providing mandatory staff training (including police and security) on PBIS, implicit bias, and the uniform complaint process used for discrimination claims.

The settlement also provides for community input at special community meetings held two times per year, where the District will present data and the community will have the opportunity to present concerns.

Plaintiffs' attorneys will continue to be involved with the community and will be vigilant in holding KHSD to its commitments under the settlement.

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July 24, 2017

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**STATEMENTS / Kern Latino and African American Students Achieve Victory
in Landmark Settlement with Kern High School District**

*Civil Rights Groups Battled for Three Years to Stop Discriminatory Practices
Denying Students Their Educational Rights*

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (June 24, 2017) – Please attribute the following statements on a settlement reached between Latino and Black students, community activist organizations and the Kern High School District to the following organizations: California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA), MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund), Equal Justice Society, Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance, Inc. (GBLA), and Wilson, Sonsini, Goodrich & Rosati, P.C. The settlement approved today with the Kern High School District (KHSD) Board of Trustees is the result of a three-year court battle to stop years of discriminatory discipline practices that deprived African American and Latino students of their right to an education.

“This settlement provides structure and accountability for addressing the discriminatory effects of the District’s past practices. The Plaintiffs and the community spent years before the lawsuit and nearly three years after it was filed working to have the District comply with their legal requirements to educate all students and to stop discriminating against the most vulnerable students. We are proud to have been at their side helping them obtain this settlement,” said **Cynthia L. Rice, CRLA Director of Litigation and Training**, “and CRLA will be right here during the next 3 years to make sure the terms of the settlement are met.”

"A primary purpose of the federal ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) is to eliminate achievement gaps," said **Kip Hustace, staff attorney at MALDEF**. "To accomplish that goal, all educators—whether in school districts or county and state agencies—must focus on eliminating disparities that contribute to those gaps, especially discipline and transfer disparities. This settlement, with community members' vigilance and participation, will help the Kern High School District to make good on California's guarantee that all students will receive a high-quality education regardless of circumstance."

“While nothing can ever make up for the trauma and struggles experienced by the parent and student plaintiffs, we believe this settlement will bring incredible improvements to the culture and environment

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of the Kern High School District and ensure future students do not experience the same discrimination within the District," said **Lyndsi Andreas, staff attorney at GBLA.**

"Racially biased discipline is often the result of unacknowledged stereotypes of Latino and Black students that result in their being suspended and expelled in disproportionately higher numbers than their white counterparts. The district has retained a number of experts on how to lessen the negative impact of implicit bias, racial anxiety, and other mind science phenomena," said **Eva Paterson, President of the Equal Justice Society.**

"This is a major first step, but it will take commitment and continuous effort on behalf of all of the parties involved to bring our students of color in KHSD to the highest level of quality education that all students deserve," said **Dolores Huerta, President of the Dolores Huerta Foundation.**

"Faith In Kern looks forward to partnering with the KHSD on continuing to implement restorative justice practices, improving school climate and dismantling the school to prison pipeline," said **Joey Williams, Faith in Kern Chapter Director.** "The settlement will help ensure that our children have access to colleges, universities, good jobs and a life of opportunity that God intended, not one dictated by divestment, discrimination and incarceration. We are excited about this settlement, but will be vigilant and active in ensuring all students receive an equitable education and these agreements are kept."

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