



NEWS RELEASE

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ARLINGTON NAACP TAKES LEGAL ACTION AGAINST THE ARLINGTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT SEEKING INJUNCTIVE RELIEF AT NICHOLS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

The Arlington Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has filed for injunctive relief with the State Court in Tarrant County as part of a lawsuit on behalf of the students, faculty and staff of Nichols Junior High School against Arlington Independent School District. The Complaint, which was prepared by Civil Rights attorney Lee Merritt and will be filed by the coordinated efforts of NAACP counsel and local attorneys, includes counts of negligence and fraud by Arlington ISD and the companies they hired to address hazardous air quality issues on the campus.

Since September 2016, more than 520 complaints have been lodged with AISD by students, faculty and staff who suffered from symptoms not limited to nausea, vomiting, headaches, dizziness and fainting. These symptoms manifest within minutes of entering the school building.

The Arlington NAACP is seeking an emergency court order that will bar the school district from allowing students and staff on the Nichols Junior High School campus until the source(s) of air quality issues have been identified and remediated. Our primary focus is on the health and safety of students and staff who learn and teach in that facility on a daily basis.

A report by Dr Alisa Rich, a leading expert in chemical exposures and health impacts, is attached as an exhibit to the litigation. After reviewing available data the report clearly states "The symptoms described may be strongly associated with brain and central nervous system impact commonly associated with exposure to volatile organic compounds and/or carbon monoxide." She suggests the immediate evacuation of the school in order to avoid prolonged exposure with likely irreversible consequences.

"The issue of air quality at Nichols Junior High School is an issue of environmental justice," said Alisa Simmons, president of the Arlington NAACP. "Of particular concern to the NAACP is the population of this Title 1 school, which is comprised largely of ethnic minorities. Not only are these students unable to adequately advocate for themselves without having the knowledge base and resources to collect the necessary evidence, but the faculty and staff are facing punitive consequences for seeking assistance for the children and themselves. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Arlington NAACP to step in."

The primary goal of the school district is to ensure a quality education in a safe environment. It is our opinion that AISD is not fulfilling their charge in this case; where students and staff are fainting, experiencing headaches, aching of limbs, purging and lethargy---all the while staff members are being removed, forced on FMLA and resigning simply for not wanting to subject their students and themselves to a persistently 'sick' work and educational environment.

Our aim is not to create conflict with the district; our goal, and our mission, is to fight to ensure citizens' civil rights are not violated. Nichols Junior High students and staff have the right to learn and work in a safe environment, just as all other constituents of the Arlington ISD.

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