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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement on Retirement of School Superintendent Dr. John Ramos

We received the news of the retirement of South Orange-Maplewood School District Superintendent Dr. John Ramos with acceptance and disappointment. We do wish him well in his retirement.

Upon his arrival, Dr. Ramos was well aware of the deficiencies of this district, most notably the history of discriminatory practices that harmed African-American students and those of African-Caribbean heritage. His predecessor, Brian Osborne, bequeathed to Dr. Ramos the burden of addressing the findings of an investigation by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR), and subsequent claims made in complaints filed by the ACLU and UCLA Civil Rights Project. It was not an easy burden to assume but a necessary responsibility to fulfill.

Dr. Ramos' tenure can best be described as challenged. Despite often articulating a vision for change, he often got bogged down in process and was unable or unwilling to dismantle systems that had disadvantaged Black students and students with special needs, many of the latter also Black. Significant blame falls upon the elected school Board that, save one member, was more invested in the past, preserving practices that were known to harm Black students, and forming a wall of resistance to moving the district into the 21st century.

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We are now forced to endure another transition, another period of uncertainty. This time, however, we do so armed with a Resolution Agreement the district has signed with the federal education department's Office of Civil Rights. The Black Parents Workshop also enters this period of change fully prepared to test the legality of the district's practices in state and federal courts, and willing to exercise our options under state education regulations to compel oversight of the district to bring it into compliance with the law. There is no longer room for excuses or appeals for patience.

Whoever next accepts the responsibility to lead the South Orange-Maplewood School District must be prepared to radically change our school system and embrace **equity, access** and **inclusion** as guiding principles. The failure to do so will plunge the district into a period of instability that will irreparably harm the communities of South Orange and Maplewood.

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