Extensive Entanglement Between Boston Public Schools and ICE, Documents Show

BPS Must Shut Down School-to-Deportation Pipeline Immediately

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BOSTON — Documents secured in a lawsuit brought by civil rights and education advocates show far more extensive interactions between Boston Public Schools (BPS) and federal immigration enforcement than the City has previously admitted. Since 2014, at least 135 student incident reports generated by BPS have been made accessible to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) via the Boston Regional Intelligence Center (BRIC), an information-sharing network of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies that is funded by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and housed within the Boston Police Department. Advocacy organizations that released the information today called upon BPS to shut down this school-to-deportation pipeline immediately and to cease all collusion with ICE.

BPS entanglement with ICE first came to public attention in 2017, when an East Boston High School student was deported based in part on a BPS incident report of a run-of-the-mill school incident—a failed attempt by students to start a fight—that ICE had accessed after BPS shared it with the BRIC. Advocates filed a public records request with BPS to determine the full extent of this troubling student information-sharing practice and subsequently sued when the City refused to turn over the redacted records.

Denials made by City officials at the time of the lawsuit's filing have now been shown to be false. For example:

- Mayor Walsh claimed, "The assertion that the City of Boston or the School Department is turning information over to the federal authorities is not true." *Walsh Calls Lawsuit Against BPS "Meritless."* In fact, by the time of Walsh's statement, BPS had already given federal immigration authorities access to scores of student incident reports via BRIC—and continued to do so after his denial.

- Former BPS Superintendent Tommy Chang (who resigned within days of the lawsuit's filing) similarly stated that "[i]t would be against BPS policy to provide any student records to ICE, and BPS does not have a practice of doing so." *Superintendent Chang Affirms Protection of Immigrant Students*. In fact, the documents released today show that BPS indeed does provide student records to ICE via BRIC—precisely the practice that then-Superintendent Chang denied.

"The extent of BPS collusion with federal immigration enforcement is alarming, and much more extensive than the City has let on," said Attorney Janelle Dempsey of **Lawyers for Civil Rights (LCR)**, one of the organizations suing BPS over the records. "BPS is creating a dangerous school-to-deportation pipeline that must be stopped immediately."

"The City needs to be transparent about its practices," added Roger Rice, Executive Director of **Multicultural Education, Training and Advocacy, Inc. (META)**, another of the Plaintiff organizations. "Boston claims to be a sanctuary city, yet City officials continue to place students at risk of deportation through entanglement with ICE," Rice added.

The organizations seeking disclosure noted that BPS continues to withhold from the public critical, non-personally identifiable information that would shed further light on its practices, and that they are continuing to pursue their case in court. For example, BPS has heavily redacted most of the released reports, making it impossible to ascertain the details of the incidents reported. BPS has withheld other documents in their entirety. "We are continuing to press in court for more transparency, so that the public will know the full extent of BPS entanglement with ICE," said Kathleen Boundy, Co-Director of **Center for Law and Education**, another of the Plaintiff organizations.

Civil rights advocates are particularly concerned that BPS has redacted the race and ethnicity of students whose information has been shared with ICE via BRIC. "What we know already raises troubling questions about whether BPS is engaged in racial profiling and disproportionately targeting Latinx student information for ICE," said Iván Espinoza-Madrigal, Executive Director of LCR. "We will be asking the Court to compel disclosure of this information to the public, because there is no legal reason why BPS should be allowed to keep this information secret," Espinoza-Madrigal added.

The case is *Center for Law and Education, Inc. v. City of Boston, et al.*, Suffolk Superior Court No. 18-01938.

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