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October 7, 2021

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Attorney General Garland and Secretary Cardona,

Parents across the nation are engaging with school leaders, including school boards, over how their children are being educated. Parent engagement is a critical part of a child's education. Even when the subjects may be tough, it is important for school officials, elected officials, and teachers to understand and address parents' concerns. Violence and threats of violence are never acceptable. Neither are school boards hiding behind law enforcement rather than dealing with parents' sincere concerns.

In recent weeks we have heard that Secretary Cardona disparaged parents, calling them angry because "their guy didn't win." When asked by Sen. Braun at a U.S. Senate hearing to retract this statement, Secretary Cardona refused to do so.¹ That is unacceptable from the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. Instead of dismissing parents' concerns, you should listen and meaningfully engage with these parents. Then you should work to understand their concerns,

¹ <https://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/school-reopening-during-covid-19-supporting-students-educators-and-families>

show them their opinions matter, and support parents' efforts to improve the education of their children.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) is equally at fault for disrespecting and abandoning parents. Mr. Attorney General, your October 4, 2021, memorandum announcing your intention to promulgate "a series of measures designed to address the rise in criminal conduct directed toward school personnel"² is alarming. Providing local law enforcement assistance if requested is part of the responsibilities of the DOJ and would be an appropriate step, but "the creation of a task force, consisting of representatives from the department's Criminal Division, National Security Division, Civil Rights Division, the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, the FBI, the Community Relations Service and the Office of Justice Programs, to determine how federal enforcement tools can be used to prosecute these crimes, and ways to assist state, Tribal, territorial and local law enforcement where threats of violence may not constitute federal crimes"³ is meant to threaten families and quash their right to speak to their elected officials.

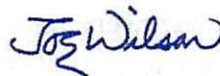
Parents should not harass or threaten violence to school officials, nor should parents be intimidated, threatened, or coerced from speaking out about concerns in their schools. Sunshine on these policies is key to ensuring children receive the best education possible; your actions to dismiss or threaten the lawful expression of parents' legitimate concerns is harmful to our nation. Attorney General Garland, Secretary Cardona—it is imperative that you brief the Committee on your plans prior to any action.

We appreciate your attention to these concerns and for promptly scheduling a briefing on these issues. Please reach out to Mandy Schaumburg, mandy.schaumburg@mail.house.gov, with any questions and to schedule the briefings.

Sincerely,



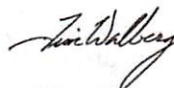
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² Garland, M. U.S. Department of Justice. (2021). *Justice Department Addresses Violent Threats Against School Officials and Teachers*.

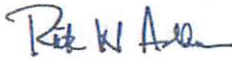
³ <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-addresses-violent-threats-against-school-officials-and-teachers>



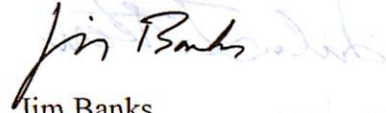
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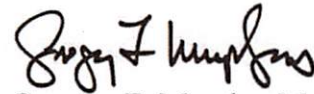
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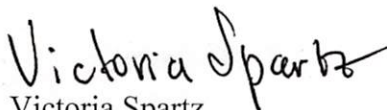
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