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U.S. Attorney's Office, District of New Jersey, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights & New Jersey Division on Civil Rights Presents: Addressing Discrimination in New Jersey Education

AGENDA

January 26, 2023

Moderator

Mike Campion, Chief of the Civil Rights Division

United States Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey

Panelists

- **Kelly Horan Florio**, Senior Civil Rights Counsel
United States Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey, Civil Rights Division
- **Lisa Khandhar**, Attorney
United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights
- **Danielle Thorne**, Legal Specialist
NJ Office of the Attorney General, Division on Civil Rights
- **Carolyn Hayer**, Executive Director
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network

Questions and Answers

Closing Remarks

Mike Campion, Chief of the Civil Rights Division

United States Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey

Anne Burton Walsh, Co-Chair of Ridgewood Ambassadors for Global Citizenship ("RAG").

Moderator & Panelists

Michael Champion *(Moderator)*

Chief of the Civil Rights Division, U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of NJ

Michael E. Champion is an Assistant United States Attorney and Chief of the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Attorney's Office in the District of New Jersey under U.S. Attorney Philip Sellinger.

As the Civil Rights Chief, Mr. Champion supervises the civil rights enforcement matters at the U.S. Attorney's Office. In that role, he guides civil rights investigations, and where appropriate, brings civil actions in U.S. District Court to enforce the federal civil rights laws. Mr. Champion has pursued civil rights matters under several statutes, including the Fair Housing Act, Equal Credit Opportunity Act, Civil Rights Act of 1964, Americans with Disabilities Act, Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act, Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, and the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994. He also supervises criminal investigations and prosecutions involving hate crimes, color of law violations, and access to reproductive healthcare.

In addition, Mr. Champion is in touch with many in the civil rights community, including advocates for religious, ethnic, and racial minority groups, as well as advocates for LGBTQ+ individuals, individuals with disabilities, fair housing rights, and prisoner rights. He meets regularly with civil rights advocates throughout the State and has organized trainings regarding federal civil rights protections under several statutes, including the Fair Housing Act and Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as federal civil rights protections against religious discrimination. Mr. Champion also is in contact with advocates for servicemembers and military legal assistance offices and has provided training on civil rights protections for servicemembers and veterans.

Mr. Champion has led several notable civil rights enforcement matters, including *United States v. Lakeland Bank* (redlining), *United States v. State of New Jersey (Edna Mahan)*; *United States v. Joseph Centanni* (sexual harassment in housing); *United States v. Hudson City Savings Bank* (redlining). Last year, Mr. Champion received a distinguished service award from Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clark.

Mr. Champion received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1994 from New York University. He received a Juris Doctorate, cum laude, in 1999 from Fordham University School of Law, where he was the Notes and Articles editor of the Fordham Law Review. After graduating from law school, he served as law clerk to Judge Alfred M. Wolin of the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey. From 2000 to 2007, he worked as an associate in private practice in New York City. Since 2007, he has served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the District of New Jersey, serving as the Civil Rights Coordinator of the Civil Division from 2013 to 2016, the Chief of the Civil Division's Civil Rights Unit from 2016 to 2022, and the Chief of the Civil Rights Division since 2022.

Kelly Horan Florio, *Senior Civil Rights Counsel* *U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of NJ, Civil Rights Division*

Kelly Horan Florio is Senior Civil Rights Counsel in the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the

District of New Jersey. Ms. Florio has been working exclusively in the area of civil rights in the District of New Jersey since 2016, enforcing a number of federal civil rights statutes including, but not limited to, the Equal Opportunities Education Act, Civil Rights Act of 1964, Fair Housing Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act of 1994, and the Voting Rights Act. During this time, Ms. Florio has won several significant awards for her work in the area of civil rights, among them the Assistant Attorney General's Distinguished Service Award and the Director's Award for Superior Performance as an Assistant United States Attorney—Civil.

From 2003 through 2016, she worked as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Civil Division in the Eastern District of New York, where she represented the United States in a wide variety of affirmative and defensive matters and cases, some involving civil rights issues. Prior to that, she litigated in private practice, including work as an associate with Reed Smith LLP, where she specialized in general education and special education issues.

Ms. Florio received her undergraduate degree from Washington and Lee University and her law degree from Washington and Lee University School of Law.

Lisa Khandhar, *Attorney*

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights

Lisa Khandhar has been a compliance team attorney for the U.S. Department of Education since May 2016.

Danielle Thorne, *Legal Specialist*

NJ Office of the Attorney General, Division on Civil Rights

Danielle Thorne (she/her) is a Legal Specialist in the Strategic Initiatives and Enforcement Unit at the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights' (DCR). She leads her unit's policy and enforcement initiatives on youth bias, policing & prisons, and worker protection, which are aimed at proactively preventing discrimination and harassment in education, policing, and employment. Danielle led DCR's drafting and publication of reports on sexual harassment and youth bias, and is currently managing several of the Division's efforts to implement the policy recommendations in those reports. Before joining DCR, Danielle was a senior associate in private practice where she managed complex civil litigation and compliance matters, engaged in internal investigations, and maintained an active pro bono practice focused on criminal justice and education reform. Danielle received her undergraduate degree in Africana Studies and Sociology from Rutgers University, where she also completed a Certificate in Women's Leadership for social change with the Institute for Women's Leadership. She received her law degree from St. John's University School of Law.

Carolyn Hayer, *Executive Director*

SPAN Parent Advocacy Network

Carolyn Hayer is the Executive Director of SPAN Parent Advocacy Network, a parent-led organization located in Newark, NJ (www.spanadvocacy.org). SPAN is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower families and to inform and involve professionals and other individuals interested in the healthy development and education of children. Carolyn has been working in the field of parent/ family advocacy for over thirty years and has conducted presentations at the local, state and national levels on topics related to health and education advocacy, family-professional partnerships, and family and youth leadership development. In addition to leading the SPAN team in their efforts to provide information, training, leadership development, and assistance to families, she has supported

other organizations across the nation in building their capacity to serve families, addressing issues such as reaching, supporting, and providing equitable services to underserved populations, as well as effective non-profit management. She has served on multiple committees, councils, task forces, and Boards focused on improving the lives of children and families.