



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 16, 2021

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NAACP STATEMENT REGARDING GREATER ALBANY SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE CITY OF ALBANY POLICE DEPARTMENT

The NAACP Corvallis/Albany Branch stands in solidarity with students and parents who have been impacted by trauma due to actions and reactions of the Greater Albany Public School (GAPS) District and the Albany Police Department (APD). The following statement addresses the decision to post armed, uniformed police officers at schools in Albany to welcome children on their first day of in-person learning.

Our focus must be on the safety and mental health of the children and parents of GAPS, to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination. As our region watches the inexcusable actions of police officers on a national stage, we have been disappointed that the pain and fear in our most vulnerable populations has been largely overlooked, dismissed, and judged in our own communities here in Benton and Linn Counties.

To those in our community who are feeling unwelcome, unheard, confused, or angry, those feelings are valid and we stand ready to offer any support that we are able to give. We encourage you to reach out with concerns around the events of the past few weeks. We will hold any communication with the utmost respect for your privacy and anonymity if desired. We at the NAACP see you, we care about you, and we stand with you. In order to build a safer, more inclusive community for all we must come together in these times and work towards that goal.

We appreciate our relationships with GAPS and the APD, which have included ongoing, open conversations and healthy dialogue around these issues. Therefore, we were disappointed when we became aware that they had made the joint decision to post officers at schools as students arrived

for their first day of in-person learning this school year. Both APD and GAPS have teams in place to offer a collective voice for how to best serve those who have been traditionally underserved. Members of our branch volunteer on both teams. They have continued to express the need to advance conversations that will yield positive social change.

Our education district leaders have made the commitment to racial equity with the adoption of a Regional Racial Equity Proclamation, which reads in part:

“We recognize that our beliefs and values must match our actions. It is our collective stance that we must ensure school communities where all students have equal access and opportunities without discrimination based on race... Our mission is to confront, interrupt, and dismantle systems of inequity that persist for our students, staff, and families of color.”

We value the words of this proclamation and ask that the words be turned into action to surround and support each other towards these goals. We now call on all city leaders to: 1) deescalate the increasing divisions in the city of Albany around race and policing that are harmful to members of our communities, 2) publicly educate and demonstrate how your organizations will indeed “build bridges” to ensure the safety and well-being of all residents, 3) continue the work of listening to those who have been excluded and marginalized, especially our Black, Indigenous, and other community members that identify as persons of color, 4) and most importantly recognize that you are responsible for creating a community where all are heard, valued, and included.

END