



**For Immediate Release**  
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### **LDF Issues Statement on Historic School Desegregation Case Settlement**

On behalf of lead plaintiff, Elizabeth Horton Sheff, the [NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.](#) (LDF), the Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA), the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Center for Law and Economic Justice, and Horton, Dowd, Bartschi & Levesque, PC announced today that a final settlement agreement has been reached in *Sheff v. O'Neill*, a longstanding school desegregation case against the State of Connecticut that seeks to address the severe racial and economic segregation between students in the city of Hartford and its surrounding suburbs.

"I have always believed that when we push for quality, integrated education," said Ms. Horton Sheff, "we're fighting for all students — regardless of their race or background — to get the education they deserve. This settlement is a victory not just for Connecticut families, but for the larger cause of education equity across the country."

In 1996, the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled that the Connecticut State Constitution was violated by the extreme racial segregation between the predominately Black, Latinx, and low-income schools in Hartford on the one hand, and the overwhelmingly white and high- or middle-income schools in the surrounding suburbs on the other. Throughout the ensuing decades, a number of agreements between the plaintiffs and the state have established nearly 40 inter-district magnet schools, and a robust Open Choice program that allows Hartford students to transfer to suburban schools. Today, over 56% of Hartford students attend a magnet or Open Choice school.

If the proposed settlement is approved by both a judge and the Connecticut State Legislature, it will result in a permanent injunction enforcing the key terms of a long-term Comprehensive Choice Plan (CCP) intended to redress the consequences of decades of disinvestment and exclusion. Among other provisions, the CCP commits Connecticut to significantly expand the number of available seats for students from Black, Latinx, and/or low-income families who have been the victims of entrenched and systemic discrimination. Additionally, the agreement would require Connecticut's Department of Education to publicly report data on educational equity and to commit to greater diversity in its hiring practices.

"This settlement would represent a significant movement toward educational equity and the proper enforcement of laws against racial and economic segregation in the Hartford-area school system," said LDF assistant Counsel Cara McClellan. "The challenges of today require leaders who are committed and understand that we all must work together to achieve true racial equity."

“This settlement would lock-in a commitment to racial and economic integration by the State of Connecticut,” said Martha Stone, the executive director of the Center for Children’s Advocacy, who has represented the plaintiffs in this case since 1989. “For the first time since this case was filed, this settlement would include a guarantee that any Hartford student who wants to attend a quality integrated school or program can do so. That guarantee would be backed by funding and a plan.”

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*Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation’s first civil and human rights law organization. LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Follow LDF on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).*

*Center for Children’s Advocacy protects the legal rights of children who are dependent upon the judicial, child welfare, health and mental health, education, and juvenile justice systems for their care. CCA is the largest children’s legal rights organization in New England, with offices in Hartford, Bridgeport, on site at Yale New Haven Hospital, Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, and Yale Child Study Center. More information about CCA can be found at [cca-ct.org](http://cca-ct.org).*