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Judge Sets Deadline for Murphy Administration to Respond to Historic School Integration Lawsuit

Jacobson rejects move that would delay proceedings

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Mercer County Assignment Judge Mary C. Jacobson yesterday ordered the Murphy administration to respond by the end of the month to a landmark lawsuit designed to integrate New Jersey's public and charter schools.

Judge Jacobson denied the administration's request to transfer the case to an administrative proceeding before Education Commissioner Lamont O. Repollet, who is a defendant in this case. Such a transfer could have caused unnecessarily long delays.

The case was filed in Mercer County Superior Court in May, on the anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's historic decision in the Brown v. Board of Education school desegregation case, on behalf of a group of public school children and a series of civil rights and faith-based organizations, including: the NAACP New Jersey State Conference, the Latino Action Network, the Latino Coalition, the Urban League of Essex County and the United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey.

They argue that the state's segregated schools violate students' rights under the New Jersey Constitution. New Jersey is the sixth most segregated state for African-Americans and the seventh most for Latinos.

The case is being coordinated by the New Jersey Coalition for Diverse and Inclusive Schools.

In response to Judge Jacobson's ruling, former New Jersey Supreme Court Justice Gary S. Stein, the Coalition's Chairman, issued the following statement:

“The courts are the proper venue to hear this important civil rights case, and we are pleased that Judge Jacobson declined the Attorney General’s request to transfer our case. We are also pleased that Judge Jacobson set out a schedule for the case to move forward.

“The facts are indisputable: New Jersey’s schools are among the most segregated in the country. This deep segregation denies students of all races the educational experience that they deserve.

“We are gratified that the Governor acknowledged the seriousness of the problem in his public response to our lawsuit and hope that we can work together with him and the Attorney General’s Office to address and resolve this extraordinarily important issue.”

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The New Jersey Coalition for Diverse and Inclusive Schools was founded in 2016 as a broad group of community leaders, parents, faith leaders, civil rights advocates and members of the business community who have come together to tackle head-on the problem of racial segregation in New Jersey’s public schools. Learn more by visiting our website at www.inclusiveschoolsnj.org.