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Statement on Carlsbad Superintendent's Violation of Fundamental Constitutional Rights

Carlsbad, May 22, 2023 – The Carlsbad Education Alliance is extremely dismayed by the biased and bigoted statement of Carlsbad Unified School District (CUSD) Superintendent Benjamin Churchill against a CUSD employee, in clear violation of that employee's fundamental right to free speech and freedom of religion under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. We demand that Superintendent Churchill immediately retract the statement and ensure that CUSD is a safe space for *all* employees, students and parents.

Superintendent Churchill's statement also deliberately misrepresents the comments by the employee as not supportive of LGBTQ+ students when the employee's statements specifically asked that members share their message "in love" and "from a place of concern for our kids." The employee's statements are therefore not in conflict with any state law or district policy.

A Superintendent condemning the speech and religious views of an employee not only violates that employee's constitutional rights, it additionally places a chilling effect on the speech of *all* staff, students and parents in CUSD that speech or religious values which the Superintendent personally disagrees with will be publicly condemned.

Ironically, tomorrow CUSD is hosting a series of town halls to discuss its proposed "Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan," of which a core principle is building "*diverse and inclusive* environments by fostering the development of trusted relationship with staff and the community." Sadly, Superintendent Churchill's biased and bigoted statement condemning the religious beliefs of an entire church and its members shows exactly why these DEI plans are simply excuses for those in power to suppress speech and decrease diversity and inclusion in public schools.

Superintendent Churchill's statement not only places CUSD in immediate legal jeopardy for violating the employee's rights, but potentially in far greater legal jeopardy for attempting to suppress the speech of *any* employee or student in CUSD which differs from his own. The Carlsbad Education Alliance demands an immediate retraction and apology by Superintendent Churchill and is considering all possible legal remedies to protect the rights of *all* employees, parents and students at CUSD.

The Carlsbad Education Alliance is a coalition of parents, students and staff in the Carlsbad Unified School District committed to transparency, accountability and academic excellence.