



**For Immediate Release
Friday, March 15, 2019**

LDF Media
212-965-2200 / media@naacpldf.org

LDF Statement on Preliminary Court Ruling in Hartford, Connecticut Education Equity Case

A federal court yesterday denied a preliminary motion for judgment on the pleadings in a case on integrated education in Hartford, Connecticut. The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) [argued against the lawsuit](#) and will continue the fight for education equity for all Hartford students.

“This is only the first step in this legal battle,” said Elizabeth Horton Sheff, an education activist and a named plaintiff in *Sheff v. O’Neill*, a landmark case that advanced integration in Hartford schools. “This ruling doesn’t change the value of providing each child an integrated education. Even with the progress we’ve made in the last 20 years, Hartford has a long way to go before it meets its obligation to give every student the chance they deserve. We will continue fighting.”

The lawsuit was brought by the Pacific Legal Foundation, an ultraconservative California legal organization, on behalf of several Hartford parents. At stake is a race-neutral lottery system used to assign students to a system of racially diverse magnet schools created in the wake of the historic Connecticut Supreme Court case *Sheff v. O’Neill* (1996), in which LDF continues to represent clients. The Pacific Legal Foundation’s suit claims that the lottery discriminates against Hartford’s students of color, which is false.

In fact, the lottery expands opportunity for Hartford’s minority students. A recent analysis by the *Connecticut Mirror* found that 49 percent of Hartford students who applied to a magnet were offered a seat, as compared to only 36 percent of suburban applicants. Today, more than 20,000 suburban and Hartford students attend 41 integrated magnet schools and related programs created because of the *Sheff* ruling.

“The crucial, hard-won progress of *Sheff* is not something that the court should allow to be erased by the Pacific Legal Foundation’s lawsuit,” said LDF Skadden Fellow [Cara McClellan](#). “The judge has not yet had an opportunity to consider the facts at this preliminary stage. We will proceed to discovery. This will not alter our efforts to protect *Sheff*’s promise of education equity throughout Connecticut. We

look forward to defending equal justice under the law and every child’s right to high-quality, integrated schools.”

Read more about the case in LDF’s recent op-ed for the Hartford Courant [here](#).

Learn more about the advocacy efforts around education equity in Hartford [here](#).

###

Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation’s first civil and human rights law organization and 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](#).