

STATEMENT

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Fairfax County Parents Association (FCPA)

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Statement on the Firing of Glasgow Middle School Counselor

(Fairfax, VA) – Like all members of the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) community, we were shocked to learn that a Glasgow Middle School counselor was allowed to remain employed with FCPS for over a year after being charged and then convicted of a child sex crime. The circumstances that finally led to this week's decision by FCPS to fire this counselor underscore the deep concerns parents have about FCPS's apparent bureaucratic inability to stay focused on executing not only its key mission of excellence in academics but also its key role as *partners* with parents in the safety of children while in the custody of the school system.

We thank the new superintendent, Dr. Reid, for quickly notifying the school system community of the situation and the steps that she is taking to investigate and address the issue. We hope that under her leadership, FCPS will take strong, decisive action to ensure that a situation like this can never happen again. As a community we have an obligation to put the safety, and the academic, mental, and social health of our children ahead of stagnant bureaucracy and excuses. We very much appreciate Dr. Reid's acknowledgement that the buck will stop with her on this and other issues in the school system. We also want to thank the Chesterfield County, VA police department for its professional handling of the situation and its efforts to follow up with FCPS to get this predator out of the path of schoolchildren.

We call on FCPS to, at the very least, do the following:

1. Immediately enforce a new policy that requires every employee of Fairfax County Public Schools who, as a function of their job, may have one-on-one contact with children to be subject to a criminal background check annually. People in our community who volunteer to work with children are routinely subjected to background checks in order to do so. The school system should not be exempt from such a requirement for a criminal background check that is updated annually to catch changes in the employee's criminal background.
2. To institute a clear and publicized process by which parents and students may notify the school system in an official way of incidents or concerns that have put children at risk of sexual or other harm. While we urge families to immediately notify police of any incidents where their children were harmed or at risk of harm, the school system cannot put its head in the sand and say, "we lost the email," when it comes to child safety. There needs to be a specific notification system run through FCPS headquarters, with FCPS staff who are clearly accountable to ensuring that concerns and incidents are investigated and addressed. The idea that 200 school buildings should have differing internal processes for addressing possible incidents involving FCPS staff is not acceptable. That is exactly what predators drawn to jobs working with children are counting on.
3. To provide to the public the full final report on this incident, how the failures occurred, and how internal processes have been changed to ensure it never, ever happens again.

A key to rebuilding trust with FCPS parents is truthful transparency, a serious and significant response to situations in FCPS that put children's physical and mental safety at risk, and a change in tone out of FCPS that shows a sincere desire to work with parents as partners to address the many challenges in the school system and ensure that all of our community's children have bright, safe, and successful futures.

Fairfax County Parents Association (FCPA) is a volunteer-led, non-partisan, grassroots coalition of thousands of parents who came together in June 2020 to advocate for a choice to return to in-person education in Fairfax County Public Schools. The group's participants include parents from all areas of Fairfax County who come from across the political spectrum, cultural backgrounds, and economic strata. The group advocates for student-focused, student-prioritized implementation of education and education policies in Fairfax County, VA.