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KATHERINE M. CLARK
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May 16, 2017

Mr. Alexander Dan
Interim School Director
Mystic Valley Regional Charter School
4 Laurel Street
Malden, MA 02148

Dear Mr. Dan,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the design and enforcement of the Mystic Valley Regional Charter School Uniform Policy.

In light of recent conversations with parents and per recent media coverage, it has become evident that the aforementioned Uniform Policy—specifically the prohibition of hair extensions—is disproportionately punitive toward students of color. The stated purpose of the policy is to eliminate material differences and distractions in order to maintain a culture of academic excellence, but denying students access to education and extracurricular activities in a selective and discriminatory manner does not befit that goal.

The National Women's Law Center has found that black girls are twice as likely to be suspended as white girls, despite there being no evidence of more frequent misbehavior. And in Massachusetts, black girls are 5.4 times more likely to be suspended than white girls. These uneven discipline rates are often informed by implicit bias, rob girls of valuable learning opportunities, and increase their risk of involvement with the criminal justice system. This isn't just a national problem, it's a local one.

Parents of Mystic Valley Regional Charter School students deserve assurances that their children will be educated—and disciplined—in a fair and equitable fashion. It is my sincere hope that moving forward you will work cooperatively with parents, take advantage of resources available from the NAACP, the Anti-Defamation League of New England and ACLU Massachusetts, as well as review the Uniform Policy and enforcement thereof to ensure that this is the case.

Sincerely,

Katherine M. Clark

Katherine M. Clark

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State Representative Steven Ultrino
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Malden City Council
ATTN: Lisa Cagno, Clerk of Committees
110 Pleasant Street, 3rd Floor
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Malden School Committee
ATTN: Shirley Dorai, Clerk
77 Salem Street, Room H104
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