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August 11, 2025

Mr. Kyle Steinberg
Legal Fellow
Freedom From Religion Foundation
PO Box 750
Madison, WI 53701

Mr. Matt Langer
Staff Attorney
Freedom From Religion Foundation
PO Box 750
Madison, WI 53701

VIA EMAIL: steinbergk@ffrf.org & mlanger@ffrf.org

Re: Letter and email of June 24, 2025 in
re ECJRSRHS

Dear Mr. Steinberg and Mr. Langer:

I am addressing the original letter of June 24, 2025 and the email from Mr. Langer of June 24, 2025 inquiring as to the action taken by the Columbus County School Board in reference to the above communications. Upon receipt of your letter, I immediately noticed that Superintendent Eddie Beck had been copied with the correspondence by an email directed to him. Your email was dated June 24, 2025 and was received by my computer at 6:34 PM. I did not see the same immediately, but first saw it at approximately 7:35 PM on June 24, 2025 and I sent a text to Mr. Beck, at 7:36 PM asking him to check his email, as I had just emailed a copy to Mr. Beck since I knew he had been out of town and probably had not checked his email. When we talked the next day, it was a surprise to both of us, as neither of us had heard anything concerning the contents of your letter.

Superintendent Beck and Assistant Superintendent Adam Thompson immediately began the investigative process, going to East Columbus Jr./Sr. High School, where they met with the principal and discussed each and every alleged incident referenced in your letter of June 24, 2025. As we discussed in our prior letter, the principal at ECJRSRHS is a first-year principal, who, as you well know, had an incident that occurred towards the end of 2024, which the Board has already investigated, responded to and taken appropriate action to address your concerns. The Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and I made the Board aware of your correspondence and the incidents that you described as occurring at ECJRSRHS on the three dates alleged in your correspondence, at the July 14, 2025 BOE meeting. The Superintendent also advised of the conference he held with the Principal and the staff allegedly involved in these three (3) incidents, counseling them on the mistakes, and what should have been done to avoid the same. He counseled them also on communication being important to

avoid future instances related to the issue of Separation of Church and State and religious viewpoint discrimination. The Superintendent was directed by the Board to continue to address the situation at the Principals' monthly meetings as it pertains to prayer in the schools, and the importance of each teacher and staff member adhering to the same during the school day when students are present. Should you receive any further complaints on ECJRSRHS or any other county school in our system, please feel free to contact me or Mr. Beck, the Superintendent. Our administration appreciates your bringing this matter to the attention of the school system, as this incident had not reached the administration's attention, until your letter was received. The Superintendent and the Board regret that these actions occurred, but feel confident that the same have been addressed and that the Principal and administration at ECJRSRHS have been fully advised as to how to handle any future issues and of the consequences of failing to properly handle any other violations, which may come to their attention. With all good wishes, I am

Very Sincerely,



William W. Phipps

WWP/bp
Cc:
Supt. Eddie Beck
Asst. Supt. Adam Thompson