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**** PRESS RELEASE****

SAN FRANCISCO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION COMMENDS SAN FRANCISCO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CHRISTINA OLAGUE, MALIA COHEN AND DAVID CAMPOS ON SPONSORING HEARING TO ADDRESS PLIGHT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH IN SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Hearing to review current programmatic strategies and services designed to address the disproportionality of African American youth represented in suspensions, expulsions and the achievement gap

Legislative review complements HRC’s on-going efforts to foster tangible and substantive outcomes toward community concerns and recommendation as outlined in the “Unfinished Agenda” and “African American Out-Migration” Equity and Diversity Reports

(San Francisco, CA)- The San Francisco Human Rights Commission (HRC) and members of the City’s African American community are commending San Francisco Board of Supervisors Christina Olague, Malia Cohen and David Campos for spearheading a public hearing on the systemic inequities in education and the resulting impact on African American students in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD). The joint hearing with the City and School District Select Committee will focus on the alarming disproportionality in the drop-out rate and the achievement gap that exist between African American students and the overall student population in the City.

The Human Rights Commission has long advocated for more efforts on the part of City leaders to recognize education as a human right. The HRC considers this hearing a pivotal advancement toward this end goal. Both the agency’s Equity Advisory Committee (EAC) and African American Leadership Council (AALC) have been working to develop strategies to effectively address the historical disproportionality of African American youth represented in school suspensions, expulsions and the achievement gap. This hearing is intended to examine the potential cause and effect related to this issue and to consider policies that could ultimately correct past disparities which may result in more African American students graduating high school and successfully matriculating to higher education.

District 5 Supervisor Christina Olague stated, “The low graduation rates of African American students and other minority is completely unacceptable. It is my belief that education is a right, not a privilege. I hope to send a clear and strong message that student achievement must be a top priority for the City.

Through this hearing, I hope to ensure that the City and the School District can collaborate to improve student performance and make sure that all students that enter our schools leave with a solid education and a diploma.”

District 9 Supervisor David Campos noted, “The statistics are unacceptable and very upsetting. It is incumbent on the entire city family to make sure that our African-American students succeed in school and I look forward to this hearing as a first step on that path.”

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Theresa Sparks, Executive Director of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission stated, “Historically, education has played a vital role in the socio-economic advancement of people of color. African-Americans have a long-standing legacy of enriching our society through the pursuit of higher education and scholarship. This hearing is essential to identifying and adopting a modern approach to keeping young people of color in school and providing them with the tools and resources they need to succeed both academically and professionally.”

Members of an education working group associated with the African American Leadership Council called for greater action on this issue by City officials after learning about new measures being put in place by the Oakland Unified School District which is experiencing similar outcomes for its African American males students and the work the OUSD is doing to address this matter.

The joint hearing is scheduled for Thursday, September 27, 2012- Room 250 starting at 3:30pm at San Francisco City Hall.

This legislative hearing complements the HRC’s on-going efforts to foster tangible and substantive outcomes toward community concerns and recommendation as outlined in the “Unfinished Agenda” and “African American Out-Migration” equity and diversity reports.

For more information on the HRC’s efforts related to the equity and disparity reports, please contact the HRC Office at (415) 252-2500.

*The Human Rights Commission (HRC) works to increase equality, eradicate discrimination, and to protect human rights for all people.*

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