

PRESS RELEASE  
For Immediate Release

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## **SPS School Board Responds to Lawsuit**

The lawsuit filed by School Board Member Sherri D. Story [“Story”] against her fellow Board Members is without merit and will be vigorously defended. Members of the Suffolk City School Board have not violated the Virginia Freedom of Information [“FOIA”] as alleged in Story’s court filing.

Story alleges that “committee members were repeatedly meeting in person and by phone in a manner that constitutes a ‘public meeting’ subject to FOIA requirements, but without complying with the law,” — this never happened. There were no telephone meetings and no in person meetings conducted by School Board members in violation of FOIA.

Story was repeatedly advised that polling of School Board members to ascertain a member’s position with respect to the transaction of public business is allowed under FOIA, but she continues to maintain a contrary position, which is wholly unsupported in law or fact.

With regard to Story’s assertion that she and Board Member Mitnick were “unlawfully and improperly” excluded from a closed meeting, Story fails to recognize that FOIA does not compel attendance at closed meetings from remote locations by School Board members. FOIA provides that Board Members are allowed to attend “meetings” from remote locations, but the definition of meetings does not include closed meetings. Story was allowed to attend a public meeting of the School Board from a remote location for personal reasons, but not the closed meeting.

Although in her court filing Story asserts that in “numerous” closed meetings of the School Board there were discussions that went “beyond permissible exclusions from open meetings” — this never occurred. Only business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements were discussed and considered.

Story filed this lawsuit following her censure by the School Board as a veil attempt to distract attention from her repeated violations of norms and protocols, confidentiality of closed meeting discussions, and allegations that she spoke disparagingly to staff and students of Suffolk Public Schools.

Story continues to sow seeds of disunity, which only hampers the School Board’s overall ability to address some of the major issues impacting Suffolk Public Schools during this pandemic and school closure. Although Story asserts a concern for transparency in school operations, Story has been transparent, but not with the truth. She consistently peddles false and misleading information

to the general public, including the unsubstantiated allegations set forth in her lawsuit, and for no other reason than for public attention. Hopefully, the voters of Suffolk will see this for what it really is.

The School Board will mount a vigorous defense.

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