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November 22, 2021

The Honorable Regina Barrow, Chair
Louisiana Senate Select Committee on Women and Children
and Committee Members
P.O. Box 94183
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

VIA EMAIL

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

We are the attorneys who represent the plaintiffs in the three major Title IX lawsuits filed against LSU this year:

Sharon Lewis vs. Board of Supervisors of Louisiana State University, et al
Abby Owens, et al vs. Board of Supervisors of Louisiana State University, et al
Jane Does #1-6 vs. Board of Supervisors of Louisiana State University, et al

We are writing for two reasons: first, to respond to a statement made before your committee on November 15, 2021, by Winston G. DeCuir, Jr., Vice President for Legal Affairs and General Counsel for LSU; and second, to state our intention to seek a joint meeting with President Tate to discuss an expedited end to the litigation against the LSU Board of Supervisors.

With respect to Mr. DeCuir's statement, during the portion of your proceedings on November 15th in which LSU gave an update on their efforts to improve Title IX practices in response to recent legislation, Mr. DeCuir stated, **"When you do an investigation like we did, and you make it public, invariably lawyers and other folks are going to take advantage of it and try to file lawsuits."**

Blaming LSU's rape culture on victims' lawyers is not only absurd, but also callously insensitive to these women who experienced rape, assault, harassment, retaliation, and pervasive hostility for reporting Title IX violations. The Husch Blackwell Report – the "investigation" to which Mr. DeCuir was referring – documented LSU's failure to create and support a working Title IX system, a failure which enabled predators to act with impunity, while survivors and employees who reported violations of Title IX – most of whom are women - were ignored, disbelieved, and treated as second class citizens. Mr. DeCuir's statement seeks to render these women invisible to reinforce a stereotype that victims of sexual violence and harassment lack the agency to reclaim their own humanity. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The lawsuits filed on behalf of these victims are not "taking advantage" of LSU's investigation; they are legitimate efforts to achieve justice for the wrongs they suffered at the hands of their trusted university. Mr. DeCuir's cynical statements before this Committee only

serve to compound the trauma already endured by the LSU students and employees we represent. His statement has no basis in truth or decency and was intended only to plant seeds of distrust against brave women who are speaking up in the face of their trauma. Sadly, these words echo the years of victim blaming that led to the formation of this committee.


All citizens of Louisiana should be invested in what is best for our students, our educators, and our universities. This is particularly important for LSU, our state's flagship university and standard bearer. LSU's systemic failures resulted in lifelong damage for students, educators and employees who trusted they were in a safe place to live, learn, and work.

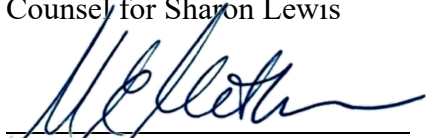
President Tate recently committed to "building a culture of transparency, trust, and accountability that deters sexual violence in the first place and protects survivors when the unthinkable does occur." Mr. DeCuir's statements before this Committee contradict this commitment by suggesting survivors and reporting employees are opportunists and liars. No wonder so few women on our university campuses trust that they will be taken seriously and fear that they will be personally attacked if they report sexual assaults, harassment, or power-based violence. This must change.

As to the second subject, we seek an early opportunity to sit down with President Tate to discuss an end to the subject litigation against the LSU Board of Supervisors and to discuss our shared vision for LSU to create a model Title IX program which has the transparency, trust, and accountability which President Tate has envisioned; one which will hold predators and their enablers accountable. We believe that only through an open, candid, and inclusive conversation is there potential to right past wrongs and allow LSU to focus on its future vision for a gold-standard Title IX program.

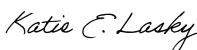
Thank you for taking the time to read our response. We are grateful for the work of this Committee and the Louisiana legislature to improve accountability and create safer educational environments for all students across Louisiana. We genuinely appreciate and commend you for the diligent work you are doing to improve our state and ensure our students and educators have safe places to study, work, and flourish.


Sincerely,



 2 (Nov 19, 2021 18:03 CST)
 Tammye Campbell Brown
 Counsel for Sharon Lewis



 Mildred E. Methvin
 Counsel for Jane Does #1-6


 Elizabeth Kamm Abdour (Nov 20, 2021 21:44 EST)
 Elizabeth Kamm Abdour
 Counsel for Abby Owens, et al


 Catherine E. Lasky
 Counsel for Abbey Owens, et al



 Bridgett brown (Nov 20, 2021 19:52 EST)
 Bridgett Brown
 Counsel for Sharon Lewis


 Elwood C Stevens Jr (Nov 21, 2021 10:00 CST)
 Elwood C. Stevens
 Counsel for Jane Does #1-6



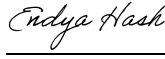
Larry English (Nov 21, 2021 11:44 EST)

Larry English
Counsel for Sharon Lewis



KAREN TRUSZKOWSKI (Nov 21, 2021 13:15 EST)

Karen Truskowski
Counsel for Abby Owens, et al



Endya Hash
Counsel for Abby Owens, et al

cc: Winston G. DeCuir, Jr. *via email*












Letter to Committee

Final Audit Report

2021-11-21

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