

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 9, 2010

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GRASSROOTS GROUPS AWAIT DAY IN COURT OVER SCHOOL FUNDING
Rallies Scheduled Today Across State

Oakland—The coalition of grassroots groups, students and parents that sued the State in *Campaign for Quality Education v. California* is holding rallies this week on the eve of a critical court hearing Friday to determine whether the case will move forward.

CQE v. California calls on the State to live up to its constitutional responsibility and “provide all California public school students with a new school finance system that sufficiently and equitably supports its public schools, so that every child has a reasonable opportunity to obtain a meaningful education that prepares them for civic, social, and economic success in the 21st century.”

The State has moved to dismiss the *CQE* case together with another similar case (*Robles-Wong v. California*). Judge Steven Brick will hear the State’s motions in both cases together at 9a.m. Friday in Alameda Superior Court in Oakland.

With the hearing in the case scheduled during school hours, members of plaintiff organizations representing hundreds of thousands of low-income students and parents from across California plan on turning out this afternoon at the State Building in downtown Oakland to voice their support for the case and its goal of providing every child a quality education. Similar rallies will be held in Anaheim and Redwood City.

“For more than a decade, student and parent groups have tried to fix our broken school funding system through the legislature. Now that we’re getting our day in court, we will be there every step of the way for as long as this suit takes. We will not let California students continue to be held hostage by the legislative paralysis and budget crisis in Sacramento,” said Penelope Cabrera-Gamez, a leader with plaintiff PICO California and parent of a 3rd and 7th grader.

The court hearing on whether the case will be allowed to proceed comes just after the California Legislature, with newly-elected members in attendance, convenes in a special session to address the state’s \$25.4 billion deficit. The Legislature is expected to consider

further cuts to California's public school funding, already among the lowest per pupil in the nation. As a result of recent budget cuts, staffing in California has dropped to historic 40-year lows compared to national averages, with California ranked 50th in its ratio of students to teachers.

"The situation just keeps getting worse. The courts need to do what the politicians can't or won't. We're in crisis and can't wait any longer," said Cherisse Gash, member of plaintiff Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment and parent of an Oakland Unified elementary student.

The suit points to the fact that a shocking *one-third* of California students fail to graduate from high school in four years and *half* fail to test proficient on California's academic content standards. California students, including white and middle income students, lag behind their peers in nearly every other state.

"This lawsuit is our lawsuit," said Evelyn Ramirez, a high school student leader from Long Beach and intern with Californians for Justice, one of the plaintiffs in the suit. "And it's important that we, the students and parents, fight to have all schools supported equally and fairly."

FAIR SCHOOLS NOW! RALLY & PRESS AVAILABILITY: Oakland

WHAT: Rally to Support the *CQE v. California* Lawsuit
WHEN: Thursday, December 9, 2010, 4pm PST
WHO: Representatives from grassroots organizations, parents and youth
WHERE: Elihu Harris State Building, 1515 Clay Street, Oakland 94612
VISUALS: Multi-ethnic crowd of chanting parents and students carrying signs, brief statements by plaintiffs, attorneys and supporters in English and Spanish, reactions to preliminary ruling if one is released.

FAIR SCHOOLS NOW! PRESS AVAILABILITY: Redwood City

WHAT: Press Conference to Support the *CQE v. California* Lawsuit
WHEN: Thursday, December 9, 2010, 3:30pm PST
WHO: Representatives from grassroots organizations, parents and youth
WHERE: Roosevelt Elementary School, 2223 Vera Avenue, Redwood City 94061
VISUALS: Multi-ethnic crowd of parents and students
brief statements by plaintiffs and parent supporters in English
CONTACT: Tameeka Bennett 650-576-5012 tameekapia@sbcglobal.net

FAIR SCHOOLS NOW! FORUM: Anaheim

WHAT: Parent training/forum on school budget and multiple-year cuts to education and CQE lawsuit
WHEN: Thursday, December 9, 2010, 6:00pm PST
WHO: Representatives from grassroots organizations, parents and youth
WHERE: Gauer Elementary School, 810 North Gilbert Street, Anaheim, 92801
VISUALS: Presentation, multi-ethnic crowd of parents and students
CONTACT: Kerry Gallagher, 714-612-5028, kerry@occcopico.org

FRIDAY COURT HEARING: Oakland

WHAT: Hearing on State's Motion for Judgment on the Pleadings in *CQE v. California* (Case No. RG10524770) and Demurrer in *Robles-Wong v. California* (Case No. RG10515768)
WHEN: Friday, December 10, 2010, 9am PST
WHO: Attorneys for *CQE v. California* & *Robles-Wong* Plaintiffs
WHERE: René C. Davidson Alameda County Courthouse
1225 Fallon St., Oakland, CA, 94612
JUDGE: Steven Brick, Dept. 17
VISUALS: Courtroom setting
NOTE: Press must contact the Court directly for permission to record in the courtroom

FOR TENTATIVE RULING IN ADVANCE, IF AVAILABLE:

<http://www.alameda.courts.ca.gov/pages.aspx/tentative-rulings>

For more information: www.fairschoolsnow.org; www.facebook.com/fairschoolsnow

ORGANIZATIONAL DESCRIPTIONS AND SPOKESPEOPLE

The Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (calorganize.org) is a statewide community organization working in eleven counties throughout California to develop community leadership, increase civic engagement in historically marginalized neighborhoods, and move people into action in order to impact local and state policy and budgets to improve the lives of low-income, working families and people of color in California. **Contact: Amy Schur, 213.804.3161.**

Californians for Justice (caljustice.org) is a statewide, grassroots organization dedicated to building power in communities that have been pushed to the margins of the political process. **Contact: Jeremy Lahoud, 562.208.9572.**

The Campaign for Quality Education (quality-education.org) is a statewide alliance of grassroots, civil rights, policy and research organizations committed to educational equity for all communities served by California's public schools. **Contact: Jeremy Lahoud, 562.208.9572.**

Howard Rice (howardrice.com) is a San Francisco law firm with leading national and international practices, representing entities and individuals across a comprehensive range of practice areas. **Contact: Deborah Douglas, 415.677.6633.**

Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP (mto.com) was founded with the belief that a law practice of the highest quality could be established in a creative and stimulating environment. Today, MTO's 185 lawyers are known for trying bet-the-company cases and negotiating deals that shape our corporate landscape. **Contact: Rohit Singla, 415.512.4000.**

PICO California (picocalifornia.org) is part of the PICO National Network of faith-based community organizations and represents 450,000 families in 73 cities throughout the state. PICO works to create innovative solutions to pressing community issues and build a legacy of leadership in communities. **Contact: Roberta Furger, 510.703.6357 or Nancy Ly 916.502.3027**

Public Advocates Inc. (publicadvocates.org) is a non-profit law firm and advocacy organization that challenges the systemic causes of poverty and racial discrimination by strengthening community voices in public policy and achieving tangible legal victories advancing education, housing and transit equity. **Contact: John Affeldt, 415.595.9563.**

San Francisco Organizing Project (sfop.org) is a non-profit, nonpartisan, grassroots coalition of leaders from over 30 congregations and schools in 17 different neighborhoods across San Francisco. Representing 40,000 families, SFOP works to create innovative solutions to the problems facing San Francisco by engaging families, youth, and seniors in public life to create a safe, healthy, and livable city for everyone. SFOP is an affiliate of the PICO National Network (piconetwork.org), a non-partisan, multi-cultural collaboration of more than 50 organizations in 17 states across the country. **Contact: Andrea Marta, 415.699.9259.**

MEDIA KIT

The following documents are available for review at fairschoolsnow.org

- *CQE v. California* Amended Complaint (August 4, 2010)
- *CQE v. California* Case Summary
- Key legal briefs filed in *CQE v. California*

Video

CQE, et al. v. California: The Grassroots Speak

In a four minute video compiled from dozens of “video postcards” submitted from around the state, California’s parents and students speak out about the broken school finance system that has failed a generation and why they have come together to participate in a historic lawsuit, *CQE et.al. v. California*.

For more information about the related lawsuit, *Robles-Wong v. California*, visit www.fixschoolfinance.org