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August 9, 2016

The Honorable James B. Comey
Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20535

Dear Director Comey:

We are writing to express how deeply troubled we are by the FBI's Don't Be a Puppet policies targeting students and immigrant families from certain backgrounds.

Public schools should be safe havens that embrace all students and families, regardless of citizenship and national origin. They should instill civic pride, not fear and suspicion. As educators and advocates, we have worked hard to provide safe, welcoming places of learning, free from harassment and discrimination, where all our children feel safe, welcome and valued. The strength of the American public school system lies in its diversity and inclusion.

Increased ideological policing and surveillance efforts like the Don't Be a Puppet campaign will have a chilling effect on our schools and on immigrant communities, jeopardizing children's sense of safety and well-being and threatening the security and sense of trust of entire communities. This is certainly not the best way to achieve the intended goal of steering youth away from extremist ideology.

The harmful effects of such a campaign cannot be overstated. Racial profiling is marginalizing and will take an emotional and psychological toll on innocent children. A generation of children is growing up living in fear due to the current hateful rhetoric in the public arena targeted at their families and communities. Efforts like Don't Be a Puppet will only exacerbate the bullying and profiling of Middle Eastern and Muslim students by creating a culture of animosity and distrust.

We would like to meet with you in person for a proactive discussion about this campaign. We have many questions about it, including how it is being disseminated, who was involved in developing the materials and how they were vetted.

We implore you to put the safety and well-being of children first, so we can ensure their health, educational and safety needs are being met.

Comey/Page 2

Thank you for considering the views of the American Federation of Teachers, our members and the undersigned organizations on this very important matter.

Sincerely,



Randi Weingarten
President



Lorretta Johnson
Secretary-Treasurer



Mary Cathryn Ricker
Executive Vice President

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
AASA, The School Superintendents Association
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)
Asian American Labor Alliance (APALA)
Center for Popular Democracy
First Focus
Institute for Asian Pacific American Leadership and Advancement (IPALA)
Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL)
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
National Council of Jewish Women
National Immigration Law Center (NILC)
National LGBTQ Task Force
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference
Schott Foundation for Public Education
TESOL International Association
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI)

C: Secretary John B. King