



P.O. Box 762  
Maplewood, New Jersey 07040  
[www.blackparentsworkshop.org](http://www.blackparentsworkshop.org)  
[blackparentsworkshop@gmail.com](mailto:blackparentsworkshop@gmail.com)  
(201) 259-8375

May 16, 2018

Ms. Elizabeth Baker  
President  
South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education  
525 Academy Street  
Maplewood, New Jersey 07040

Via Electronic Mail

Dear Ms. Baker:

I am now in possession of the video I referenced in my letter of May 14, 2018, obtained through an anonymous source. I have attached the video to this correspondence. In the video it is clear that the Board member in question is Ms. Stephanie Lawson-Muhammad.

When viewing the video, it is clear that Board Member Lawson-Muhammad attempted to exercise her civic privilege during a routine traffic stop. She immediately identifies herself as a School Board member and informs the officer she is going to call the South Orange Village President and identifies the president by first name to infer a close personal relationship. To his credit, the officer remains calm and proceeds to act in accordance with his duties. Board Member Lawson-Muhammad also infers that she is afraid of the police, a reference that I believe attempts to manipulate the officer given the tensions between the African-American community and law

enforcement. Upon the officer's return to Board Member Lawson-Muhammad's vehicle and the issuance of two summons, Ms. Lawson-Muhammad then asks the officer to call her daughter's school to inform the office that her daughter will be late, tries to convince the officer to rescind the summons, and then refers to the South Orange police chief as a "skinhead."

Under no circumstances is this behavior, from a public servant no less, is acceptable. Ms. Lawson-Muhammad must resign her position.

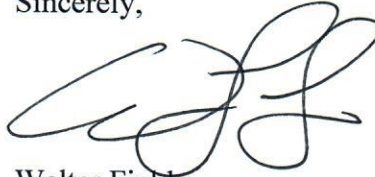
It has also been brought to my attention that on or about May 7, 2018 you may have received correspondence and the video from the South Orange Village Trustees expressing concern over Board Member Lawson-Muhammad's interaction with a Village employee. I will submit an OPRA request with the South Orange Village Trustees to determine if such correspondence exists. If it does, then it is our expectation that you will also submit your resignation from the Board of Education for withholding such information from the Board and the public. Knowing that Ms. Lawson-Muhammad identified herself as a Board Member during this traffic stop, were notified by the South Orange Village Trustees of the gravity of this incident, and you failed to take steps to address this matter is a serious ethical breach; as a Board president and as an attorney.

Ms. Lawson-Muhammad must issue a public apology to this officer. Given the lengths to which efforts are underway nationwide and locally to address the real issue of police brutality against African-Americans, it is appalling that this Board Member would conduct herself in this way. This organization, and others, is working diligently to repair the relationship between law enforcement and the African-American community. If the situation was reversed, and an officer behaved in this manner toward an African-American civilian, we would have taken the officer and the department to task. We can be no less outraged under the present circumstances. Having worked in the early stages of addressing racial profiling by the New Jersey State Police, I know too much time and energy have been expended in helping law enforcement engage with Black motorists respectfully to allow this incident with Ms. Lawson-Muhammad to go unaddressed.

The officer should be commended for his professionalism, demeanor and the respect he showed a citizen who immediately attempted to use her position to intimidate him. There are real

incidents of police misconduct. This was not one of them. I applaud the officer and would expect the Board to issue a formal statement condemning Ms. Lawson-Muhammad's behavior.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Walter Fields', written in a cursive style.

Walter Fields  
Chairman  
(973) 738-7876 – Direct

cc: South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education Members  
Mr. Lawrence S. Feinsod, Executive Director, New Jersey School Boards Association