

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



April 15, 2026

Community Leaders Raise Concerns Over Career Center Relocation and Educational Equity in North Lafayette

LAFAYETTE, LA - A coalition of community organizations, faith leaders, and elected officials is voicing serious concerns regarding the recent decision by the Lafayette Parish School System (LPSS) to relocate the district's career center and the broader implications for students in North Lafayette.

In a joint statement led by NAACP Lafayette Branch President Ravis K. Martinez, community leaders emphasized that the decision raises urgent questions about equity, access, and long-term investment in underserved communities. "The proposed relocation of the career center appears to move critical workforce and technical education opportunities further away from the students who rely on them most," said Martinez. "Accessibility - both geographic and practical - must remain a central priority in educational planning."

Research in education policy and urban planning consistently shows that proximity to educational resources significantly impacts student participation, engagement, and long-term success. Increased travel distance and transportation burdens are directly linked to lower participation rates, higher absenteeism, and added strain on families - effects that disproportionately impact underserved communities.

Community leaders also raised concerns about the financial implications of investing public funds into new or modified facilities while an existing site remains operational. They are calling for greater transparency around the cost-benefit analysis and long-term fiscal impact of the decision.

The statement further highlights the historical context of educational decisions in North Lafayette, noting a pattern of school closures, consolidations, and repurposing that has contributed to longstanding concerns about equitable resource allocation.

"This moment demands transparency, accountability, and a clear commitment to equity," the coalition stated. "Decisions affecting the future of our children must be made with the full engagement and trust of the community."

A unified coalition - including faith leaders, civic organizations, and elected officials - is currently developing a coordinated response and broader community narrative. Additional updates and next steps will be shared publicly in the coming days.

The coalition reaffirmed its commitment to strong public education and collaborative solutions that prioritize student access and opportunity.

April 15, 2026



Dear Members of the School Board and Superintendent,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our collective concern regarding the recent decision to relocate the career center and the associated actions impacting schools and students within North Lafayette.

As organizations committed to the well-being, advancement, and equitable treatment of our community, we believe this - and other recent decisions - raise serious questions that must be addressed transparently and immediately in order to build and maintain trust between the Lafayette Parish School System and the African American community.

The relocation of the career center appears to place critical workforce and technical education opportunities further from the students who rely on them most. Accessibility - both geographic and practical - must remain a central priority in educational planning.

A substantial body of research in education policy and urban planning consistently demonstrates that the proximity of educational resources is a key determinant of student participation, engagement, and long-term success, particularly for students in underserved communities. When essential programs are located further away, participation rates often decline - especially among students facing economic or logistical barriers.

Additionally, research on student transportation highlights that increased travel distance and time create measurable burdens, including reduced program participation, increased absenteeism, and added strain on families. These burdens disproportionately impact students who already face systemic challenges, further widening existing gaps in opportunity. In this context, decisions regarding the location of critical educational infrastructure must be made with careful consideration of access, equity, and real-world barriers faced by students and families.

Further, the allocation of substantial public funds toward new or modified facilities, while an existing site is already operational, requires clear and thorough justification. The community deserves a transparent explanation of the cost-benefit analysis and long-term financial implications associated with this decision.

Given the historical context of educational decisions affecting North Lafayette, it is essential that we carefully examine whether these actions contribute to a pattern of disproportionate impact on underserved communities. Over time, North Lafayette has experienced repeated school closures, consolidations, and repurposing of educational facilities, raising important questions about long-term investment, resource allocation, and sustained access to opportunity within the community. Equity must be intentional, measurable, and evident in both process and outcomes.

We believe in strong public education. We believe in collaboration. And we believe that the best decisions are made when the community is informed, engaged, and respected. This moment presents an opportunity to reaffirm that commitment.

At this time, a unified coalition of community organizations and leaders is actively developing a coordinated response and narrative regarding these actions. Additional information and next steps will be shared with the public in the coming days.

We stand united in our expectation that decisions affecting the future of our children are made with transparency, accountability, and equity at the forefront.

Respectfully,



Ravis K. Martinez
NAACP – Lafayette Branch

VOTE

Black Folks Talking

African American Heritage Foundation

AB Rubin - Lafayette Parish Councilman

Elroy Broussard – Lafayette City

Councilman

Fr. Richard Andrus, SVD - Pastor, St.

Anthony Catholic Church

Chad E. Nora - Pastor, Progressive Baptist
Church

Dr. Cory L. Young - Pastor, St. James
Baptist Church

Carl Sonnier - Pastor, St. Peter Baptist
Church

Black Voters Matter

The Greater Southwest Louisiana Black

Chamber of Commerce

LEAD Louisiana

Impact Louisiana for All

(Partial List – more to sign on in support)