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March 31, 2023

Leigh Ann O'Neill, Esq.
Managing Director of Legal Advocacy
Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism
Via email: leigh-ann.oneill@fairforall.org

Dear Ms. O'Neill:

This firm serves as counsel to the Clarkstown Central School District. Your letter dated March 27, 2023, to Ms. Diane Mitchell and Mr. Michael St. John has been forwarded to me for reply. Based on my discussions with the school district, please note the response below.

As you are likely aware, the Day of Silence is national, student-led event held in schools around the country to call attention to harassment and discrimination of LGBTQ+ people in schools. Felix Festa Middle School is one of many schools around the state and the nation at which students have elected to participate.

At Felix Festa, the event is organized and run by a student club, specifically, the Gay Straight Trans Alliance. The Alliance is made up of straight students, as well as those in the LGBTQ+ community. Participation in the event is voluntary, as is signing petitions or taking part in any events or activities in support of the Day of Silence. Other than providing for advisors, as required for all student clubs, neither the District nor the Middle School Administration directs the activities of the club or requires participation or support.

The District respects and protects the rights of all students, prohibits harassment and bullying, and has a number of policies and procedures in place to provide a safe and effective school environment. In response to you specific concerns, please note that the District does not require or pressure any students to participate in the Day of Silence, nor does it tolerate conduct which violates the rights of others.

I trust this addresses your concerns.

Very truly yours,

Lawrence J. Tenenbaum

cc: Dr. Marc Baiocco
Ms. Diane Mitchell
Mr. Michael St. John

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