



Purple For Parents United


Reasonable Accountable Responsible

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Purple for Parents Calls on Indiana Department of Education to Address Middlebury Educator Misconduct and Reform Public Complaint Process

Middlebury, Indiana - On June 3, Purple for Parents United brought to light the case of Tonja Luken, a teacher and chaperone who wore a t-shirt with the phrase "8647" - a widely recognized reference advocating violence against President Trump - during a Middlebury Schools-sponsored trip to Washington, D.C. Since the story broke, it has gained national and international attention from prominent news sources and commentators, including Newsmax, the UK-based Daily Mail, Libs of TikTok, and Indiana Lt. Governor Micah Beckwith, who publicly responded, "Do better, Elkhart County!"

In response to widespread public outrage, Middlebury Community Schools issued a statement confirming that Ms. Luken resigned following the conclusion of an internal investigation. However, due to personnel privacy policies, any disciplinary action taken has not been publicly disclosed.

This incident raises serious concerns about educator accountability in Indiana. The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) oversees teacher licensing, yet its Educator Misconduct webpage offers no mechanism for Hoosiers to report professional misconduct.

In a conversation with Cathy Danyluk, Indiana's State Attendance Officer, Purple for Parents was told that while the IDOE provides oversight, criminal charges must be pursued at the local level before any licensing

action can be taken. This interpretation is legally inaccurate.

The IDOE does not have the authority to press criminal charges. However, under IC 20-28-5-7 and administrative code 511 IAC 16-3-1(a) it may suspend or revoke a teaching license for immorality or misconduct in office upon the written recommendation of the Secretary of Education.

Purple for Parents submitted a contact form on June 10 requesting a meeting or phone call with Secretary of Education Dr. Katie Jenner to address the lack of a public complaint process. The organization received an automatic response stating that scheduling requests will be reviewed at the IDOE's next Scheduling Team Meeting, expected within two weeks. No further response has been received to date.

Purple for Parents United is calling on the Indiana Department of Education to:

- Establish a complaint process that allows Hoosiers to report educator misconduct directly;
- Exercise its existing legal authority under IC 20-28-5-7 and 511 IAC 16-3-1(a) to act on professional misconduct, whether or not criminal charges have been filed;
- Take action regarding the Middlebury incident and set a precedent for addressing misconduct even when a teacher resigns.

"Middlebury has repeatedly failed to address teacher misconduct," said Rhonda Miller, CEO of Purple for Parents United. "It's time for the IDOE to bring accountability."

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