Mr. Chris Smith   
Principal  
ABC High School  
123 Education Boulevard  
Alltown, CA, 95555

Re: Free speech violation

Dear Mr. Chris Smith,

On behalf of Jordan Williams, a student at ABC High School, I am writing to express my deep concern that Jordan was prohibited from wearing a shirt that read ‘Black Lives Matter’ on January 15, 2021.

The Education Code and California law prohibit public schools from limiting student speech unless it falls under specific exceptions, such as legal limits to profanity and hate speech. Wearing a shirt that says ‘Black Lives Matter’ is not a legal exception. The passive expression of a viewpoint does not by itself create a “substantial disruption” at school or infringe on the rights of other students or school staff.

Schools expose students to a robust exchange of ideas so they may become informed adults capable of self-governance and debate. Historically, student voices have fostered change in our nation from the Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam War protests, to current advocacy for climate change, gun control legislation, and the assertion that Black Lives Matter. Such actions by young people inside and outside of classrooms have had lasting impacts on our democracy.

Public schools are tasked with protecting the rights of students to freely express themselves, even when the message is controversial and/or others disagree with their point of view.

In closing, I implore you to allow Jordan Williams to wear his ‘Black Lives Matter’ shirt and ensure that all school staff have been instructed to uphold their constitutional free speech rights. Furthermore, I expect you to take action to prevent this breach from happening in the future.

Sincerely,

Monica Williams

Email address

321 Home Lane,  
Alltown, CA, 95555