



NYCLU

NEW YORK CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

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December 5, 2008

Joel Klein
Chancellor
New York City Department of Education
52 Chambers Street, Room 308
New York, New York 10007

Raymond Kelly
Commissioner
New York City Police Department
1 Police Plaza
New York, New York 10038

Re: Investigating use of excessive force by Hillcrest High School Safety Agents

Dear Chancellor Klein and Commissioner Kelly:

Recently, the NYCLU has received a number of deeply troubling reports that students have been assaulted, and threatened by School Safety Agents (SSAs) at Hillcrest High School in Jamaica, Queens ("Hillcrest"). According to the reports, the Hillcrest administration has been aware of these activities. If true, these allegations are evidence of serious civil rights violations and interference with students' right to go to school.

We request that you immediately commence a formal investigation into these practices and hold accountable the DOE and NYPD personnel responsible for the safe operation of the school, including the Principal, the Assistant Principal of Student Life, the School Safety Agent Supervisor for the school, and the School Safety Agents ("SSA's") at Hillcrest who are reportedly involved in these incidents.

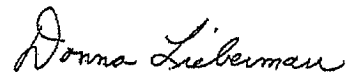
One student who has come forward publicly is Rohan Morgan. Sixteen-year-old Rohan reports that he was assaulted and beaten by a group of SSAs at Hillcrest on more than one occasion. He further alleges that, during one of these instances, multiple School Safety Agents took him to a small, windowless room where he was beaten, resulting in serious injury to his knee and bruising to his entire body. He also asserts that on another occasion he was transported without parental consent to a psychiatric emergency room after having been handcuffed and beaten. He alleges that, as a consequence of this beating, his knee was again severely injured and will require surgery. Rohan filed a personal injury claim against the City in August of this year.

In addition to this, we have received other reports that, if true, indicate Rohan is not the only student suffering abuse at the hands of some SSAs at Hillcrest High School. It has been reported that other students have suffered beatings or have witnessed beatings by SSAs in a small room in the school or in other areas on school grounds. There are also allegations of unlawful arrests prompted by SSAs.


It is our understanding that several students and at least one community organization have approached the school's administration about these reports in hopes of remedying the situation. These attempts have been fruitless, according to the organization, as the administration has turned a deaf ear to these concerns. If these reports are true, this is a matter of great urgency. We, therefore, call on you to intervene and fully investigate promptly this situation and the veracity of these claims.

We request your immediate attention to this matter and ask that you contact us to arrange a meeting. If we have not heard from you by Wednesday, December 10, 2008, we will call you. Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Donna Lieberman
Executive Director



Arthur Eisenberg
Legal Director

cc: Chief James Secreto, New York Police Department School Safety Division
Michael Best, General Counsel, New York City Department of Education