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HISD's Miles Backs Off on Gag Order After Education Unions Threatened Legal Action

HOUSTON—After being threatened with possible legal action, Houston Independent School District Superintendent Mike Miles backed off today on a misguided gag policy of prohibiting educators from using social media or other communication platforms to criticize a school or the district.

“This is a big win for the rights of teachers. Their right to speak out on issues affecting them and their students should never have been revoked. By backing off this outrageous policy, Miles hopefully has learned a very important lesson that he should carry for the rest of his tenure—stick to what’s legal and what will actually help teachers and students do the best they can,” said Houston Federation of Teachers President Jackie Anderson.

The American Federation of Teachers, HFT and Texas AFT announced on Tuesday they were exploring filing a federal lawsuit, accusing Miles of violating the First and Fourteenth amendments for gagging educators. The policy instructed school employees not to use social media or any communication platform to communicate information that could be considered damaging to the school or school district’s reputation or could undermine its high-performance culture.

AFT President Randi Weingarten called it a “dangerous overreach” and likened it to McCarthy-era tactics. HFT’s Anderson said the policy “adds to the long list of absurd changes and actions” that have nothing to do with improving student performance. Texas AFT President Zeph Capo said Miles’ changes would harm, not help, students and teachers.

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