

MARTIN & MARTIN, LLP FILES CIVIL RIGHTS LAWSUIT AGAINST LAGUNA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

LEGAL CASE STEMS FROM UNLAWFUL CLASSROOM ISOLATION & SEGREGATION OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENT

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“

We are bringing this case forward not only to secure justice for one child, but to challenge practices that quietly undermine the rights of special needs students nationwide.”

Areva Martin, Civil Rights Attorney

has filed a civil rights lawsuit against the Laguna Beach Unified School District stemming from the isolation and segregation of a special needs kindergarten student for nearly two months without parental knowledge or consent. The case arises from a classroom practice that forced a child perceived as autistic—and one of the few children of color in the class—to sit alone, separated from peers and facing a wall for 58 school days. According to the complaint, this practice was concealed from the child’s parents despite multiple school meetings and ended only after parental intervention.

Martin & Martin, LLP is bringing this case (Case No. 30-2024-01389800-CU-PO-CJC) forward nationally because it reflects a troubling and increasingly documented trend in public schools: the quiet use of isolation, seclusion, and informal exclusion of young children perceived as disabled, often outside lawful disciplinary and special education processes. Recent federal investigations and civil rights litigation across the country have revealed patterns in which children with disabilities are segregated without procedural safeguards, parents are not informed in real time, children of color face disproportionate impact, and “classroom management” replaces legally required accommodation.

The lawsuit raises core civil rights concerns involving disability discrimination, racial discrimination, failure to accommodate, denial of equal access, and emotional harm to a minor. The matter is currently proceeding toward mediation on March 10, 2026, making this a timely moment to examine how public school systems address accountability for classroom practices that fall outside formal disciplinary and special education frameworks.

“This case arrives at a moment when national attention is focused on how schools discipline and

accommodate their most vulnerable students and whether districts are being held accountable when they fail,” said Areva Martin, Founding Partner of Martin & Martin, LLP. “We are bringing this case forward not only to secure justice for one child, but to challenge practices that quietly undermine the rights of special needs students nationwide.”

Attorneys for Martin & Martin, LLP are available for interviews.

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