

For Immediate Release Date: September 19, 2019 Contact: <u>Michael Yaple</u> (609) 376-9072

Education Commissioner Issues Statement Regarding Division of Civil Rights Agreement on Hair-Cutting Incident Involving Buena Wrestler

Trenton, NJ – Education Commissioner Lamont O. Repollet today commended the agreement between the New Jersey Division of Civil Rights and the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association following a hair-cutting incident involving a wrestler from Buena Regional High School.

In the December 2018 incident, the student's hair was cut before a wrestling match because the referee told the student he would need to cut his hair or forfeit the match because he did not have a hair cover. The <u>DCR's agreement</u> with the NJSIAA calls for implicit bias training for all officials and staff involved in high school athletics in New Jersey. It also continues the suspension of the referee involved in the incident for two more years.

"The agreement with the Division of Civil Rights sends a clear and unequivocal message that the adults who oversee sporting events need to be cognizant of implicit bias, so all students can enjoy equal access to athletic opportunities," said Education Commissioner Repollet.

"The required bias training is even more compelling considering the demographics of New Jersey's classrooms, where students of color now represent 56 percent of the student population," he added.

"It is our goal to foster a greater sense of equity throughout New Jersey's schools – not only in the classroom, but in all of sporting events and extracurriculars that are part of a student's educational experience."