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September 13, 2013

Mr. James Willingham, Jr.  
School Board Attorney  
Hamilton County School District  
1235 US Highway 129 N.W.  
Jasper, FL 32052

Dear Mr. Willingham,

I understand the Hamilton County School Board is in the process of redistricting, and wanted to bring your attention to the issue of prison populations in Census data skewing local representation.

In order to draw fair districts that contain equal numbers of Hamilton residents, I urge you to use a common approach: for redistricting purposes, remove incarcerated populations from the redistricting data.

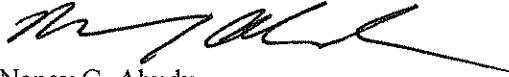
As you know, the Census Bureau counts the people incarcerated in the state's Hamilton Correctional Institution as part of your district's population. If the new school board districts are based on unadjusted Census Bureau data, the district with the prison will have few non-incarcerated residents, meaning that the few actual residents who live near the prison would have more say in local government than anyone living anywhere else in the county.

Fortunately, adjusting Census data for redistricting purposes is a straightforward solution used by more than 200 local governments around the country, including seven counties in Florida (Bradford, Franklin, Gulf, Lafayette, Madison, Okeechobee, and Washington Counties). Removing the incarcerated populations from your redistricting data would not have any impact on the school board's official population, but rather would ensure that your new districts contain equal numbers of actual county residents.

In the past, removing the incarcerated population was often technically difficult. Now, although the Census Bureau still counts incarcerated people at prison and jail locations, the Bureau has recognized jurisdictions need to be able to adjust that data for redistricting purposes. After the 2010 Census the Bureau quickly published "group quarters" data with correctional facility counts for the express purpose of allowing governments to identify and remove incarcerated populations for redistricting purposes if they wish. For Hamilton County, the Census Bureau data shows that the Census counted 2,877 people incarcerated at the Hamilton Correctional Institution, in Tract 960100 Block 2027.

I hope that you find this information helpful as your redistricting process moves forward. Please feel free to contact me at 786-363-2707 or [nabudu@aclufl.org](mailto:nabudu@aclufl.org) with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Nancy G. Abudu  
Director of Legal Operations  
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CC: Johnny Bullard  
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