

Students Matter

Defending students' rights through impact litigation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Manny Rivera

MRivera@wearerally.com, (626) 864-7467

Students Matter Adds Sandi Jacobs and Professor James Liebman to Advisory Board

LOS ANGELES — Today, Students Matter, a national nonprofit that promotes access to quality public education through impact litigation, welcomed two distinguished voices to its advisory board: Sandi Jacobs, a Principal at Education Counsel and James S. Liebman, Professor of Law at Columbia Law School and the director of the Columbia Center for Public Research and Leadership. Both Jacobs and Liebman have an extensive, impressive track record of promoting quality public education for kids.

"I am excited to welcome Ms. Jacobs and Professor Liebman to our advisory board as Students Matter continues to advocate for a bold public education system that prioritizes the needs of students," said David Welch, founder of Students Matter. "Sandi and Jim share Students Matter's commitment to ensuring that all students, regardless of race or socioeconomic background, have access to a quality public education. We are proud to have these accomplished leaders fighting with us on behalf of our nation's public school students."

Through impact litigation, Students Matter works to promote access to quality education for all students, regardless of race, background or household income. In August 2016, Students Matter joined with Connecticut parents and students to file [Martinez v. Malloy](#), a federal lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of anti-opportunity laws in Connecticut that restrict access to high quality public school options. The laws challenged in *Martinez* force thousands of Connecticut students to attend schools that consistently fail to provide even a minimally adequate education. Previously, Students Matter sponsored [Vergara v. California](#), a groundbreaking, nationally-recognized lawsuit that challenged California's teacher tenure, layoff and dismissal laws for keeping ineffective teachers in the classroom.

About Sandi Jacobs

Sandi Jacobs is a Principal at Education Counsel, where her main area of focus is educator quality. Before joining EdCounsel, Jacobs was the Senior Vice President for State and District Policy at the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ). At NCTQ, she oversaw all teacher policy work, including direct work with states and testimony and presentations for national and local audiences. She also developed and managed NCTQ's comprehensive State Teacher Policy Yearbook.

Jacobs previously worked at the U.S. Department of Education as a Senior Education Program Specialist for the Reading First and Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration programs. She

also taught 4th and 5th grade for nearly a decade at Public School 9 in Brooklyn, New York. Sandi was a Presidential Management Intern and a charter corps member of Teach For America. She holds a master's degree from Columbia University's Teachers College and a BA from Columbia College.

About James Liebman

James S. Liebman is the Simon H. Rifkind Professor of Law at Columbia Law School and director of the Columbia Center for Public Research and Leadership (CPRL). His work focuses on institutional design and change in public education and criminal justice.

Liebman founded CPRL in 2011 to engage graduate and professional students in projects designed to equalize school children's access to high-quality public schools. The center, jointly sponsored by Columbia's Business and Law Schools and Teachers College, brings together students in business, education, law, and policy from over a dozen participating universities across the country to immerse themselves for a semester in the theory and practice of transformative change in public education.

From 2006 to 2009, Liebman led the New York City Department of Education's Division of Accountability and Achievement Resources under Mayor Michael Bloomberg. His division provided parents and educators with information and tools to improve student results and hold schools accountable for helping all students make academic progress. He received New York City's 2009 Overall Excellence in Technology Award for his design of the city's educational data system.

In the criminal justice context, Liebman's work has focused on the death penalty, habeas corpus, and structures for improving the accuracy of guilt determinations. He has argued five cases in front of the United States Supreme Court in those areas and many others in lower federal and state courts. He has received the Norman Redlich Capital Defense Distinguished Service and Pro Bono award, the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers Champion of Justice award, and a Soros Senior Justice Fellowship.

Liebman served as law clerk to Judge Carl McGowan of the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia from 1977 to 1978, and to Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens the following year. He was assistant counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund from 1979 to 1985.

Liebman joined the Law School's faculty in 1985, where he served as vice dean from 1991 to 1992. He earned his J.D. from Stanford University and his B.A. from Yale College.

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Students Matter is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting access to quality public education through impact litigation, communications and advocacy.

Learn more at studentsmatter.org.