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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**JOINT STATEMENT FROM ATTORNEYS REPRESENTING VICTIMS OF SEX ABUSE IN
THE NEW HANOVER COUNTY SCHOOLS**

Wilmington, NC – This week our community was shaken once again by the predatory actions and what appears to be a subsequent coverup within New Hanover County Schools. The most recent report follows the arrest and criminal charges and investigation of Peter Michael Frank, a band teacher at Roland Grise Middle School. Peter Frank has been a teacher with the district since 1997 and has been the subject of numerous complaints and investigations during his tenure with the school system. Those investigations of complaints were handled in such a manner that he was afforded the opportunity to continue to prey on the impressionable youth of our community for decades.

As many in the community know, in 2019, our firms conducted an independent civil investigation into similar allegations and facts with regard to former New Hanover County Schools science teacher, Michael Kelly, and his sexual abuse of multiple victims over many years while employed by the school system.

On behalf of our clients and community, once again, we have found ourselves working to conduct an independent civil investigation into the facts underlying the actions of Peter Michael Frank, separate from those investigations being conducted by law enforcement and/or the school system. Our focus is on whether anyone employing Frank knew of his behavior and should bear any responsibility within our civil justice system to his victims.

As these victims begin to emerge, we simply ask that the media and public respect the privacy and sensitive nature of the injuries involved. Many victims are reliving their injuries as a result of the recent media coverage and investigations. Victims are still coming forward.

We would also like to remind victims, that in December of 2019, Governor Cooper signed new legislation into law extending access to justice through our courts for victims of childhood sexual abuse. Under the current law, the statute of limitations is extended from 21 years of age to 28. It also allows for a revival of stale claims through December 31, 2021, regardless of when the assault occurred. We encourage anyone who was a victim of sexual assault to avoid delay in holding their abuser(s) accountable.

“The protection of predators by the school system is a grave injustice to our youth and must be stopped.” said Joel Rhine, one of the lawyers investigating the case. “Members of our school board have a duty and an obligation as a school system and community to protect our children, and to not allow them to be treated as a sexual object by teachers.”

There are resources available to those who have been affected by sexual assault, including:

- [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#), tel.: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673). This group connects victims of sexual assaults to sexual assault service providers in their community.
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#), tel. : 1-800-273-8255. This group provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources.

We will be available for further comment once we conclude our investigation. Our thoughts are with the victims of this horrendous tragedy.

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