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Good afternoon.

My name is attorney Gloria Allred. Along with my co-counsel, Mariann Wang, we represent 7 women who were students at Woodward School in New York many years ago. All of these women – including those who are not in NY with us today -- are enormously brave and courageous in coming forward to report that they suffered sexual abuse as children. The *Wall Street Journal* reported some of what happened in yesterday's paper.

The reported abuse occurred decades ago, but for every single one of our clients, the incidents are not a distant memory. The abuse, and the suffering it has caused, is fresh and present. They feel it as if it happened yesterday.

That is because it happened to them as children. You see them here today as grown women, but take a look at the photos of them as children, or think of an 11 or 12 or 13 year old you know. Think about how such acts of betrayal of trust could impact a child. Think about how it

might distort a child's sense of trust, a child's sense of boundaries, a child's view of their teachers or their school. Precisely in the place where they are supposed to learn and be cared for, precisely by a person who is supposed to protect them, they instead learn that they are nothing but a sexual object, to be used. It destroys their trust. It impacts them forever.

Why are we here today? The women are here to speak today to describe directly how it impacted them, and above all to ask for accountability and to ask for change.

I want to tell you some facts that were not reported in the article.

All these women went to the Woodward School in Clinton Hill Brooklyn, but the Wall Street Journal article did not report that the Woodward School, where Bob Rusch taught and where each of these women attended school as young girls for years, was eventually acquired, in the form of Woodward Park School, by PolyPrep Country Day School in Brooklyn.

The PolyPrep Country Day School was in protracted litigation for many years based on a complaint by a number of men who alleged that PolyPrep had ignored

complaints about the school's longtime football coach, Phil Foglietta. A lawsuit filed on behalf of those men allege that coach Foglietta sexually abused many boys over many years and alleged that PolyPrep put its reputation and fund-raising efforts ahead of student safety.

The PolyPrep School expanded when it acquired the Woodward school. As PolyPrep's own website reports in its "history" section:<http://www.polyprep.org/polyhistory>)

Poly Prep expanded dramatically in 1995 with the acquisition of the site of the former historic Woodward Park School (or, as it's sometimes known, "The Mansion") on Prospect Park West in Park Slope. As Poly Prep's Lower School, this second campus provides an intimate, nurturing, and academically stimulating early childhood experience for Nursery through Grade 4 students. Fully prepared for Middle School, children move on to "big Poly" in the Grade 5.

But notably, the PolyPrep School changed it's website recently in the description of its relationship with Woodward. While the website today says that PolyPrep acquired "*the site* of the former historic Woodward Park School," the website used to say instead that PolyPrep expanded dramatically with the "acquisition of the

historic Woodward Park School.” In other words, PolyPrep used to tout its acquisition of the school, and now it tries to distance itself by noting only that it acquired the physical site of the school.

We note that the change in the website language appears to have been made recently during the time period that the *Wall Street Journal* was researching the article on our clients allegations. Why did PolyPrep change the wording on its webpage regarding its acquisition of Woodward Park School? Are they concerned about their potential liability?

We want to know more. Did PolyPrep acquire all of the records of the Woodward School or Woodward Park? When PolyPrep acquired Woodward Park, did it see the personnel files of the teachers at Woodward there? Did the board or the head of Woodward Park School inform PolyPrep that it knew about Bob Rusch because he molested girls? Did Polyprep look into this? Did they want to know if students at Woodward Park or Woodward had been sexually abused while they were pupils there or did they not want to know?

It appears that for years, PolyPrep has touted on its website this connection that it has had with – as it said “the historic Woodward Park School”. Obviously PolyPrep has been proud of this affiliation and has wanted

the world to know about its affiliation. Should it be proud? What did Polyprep know? What communications did Polyprep have before it acquired either the school or the site of its “nurturing” school. These women deserve to know.

Given PolyPrep’s history, would it be willing to sit down and meet with these women to hear their stories and to hear a history of Woodward that is not on PolyPrep’s website? We invite PolyPrep to meet with our clients. We are sending a letter today inviting and urging PolyPrep to meet with our clients.

And what about Bob Rusch? Is there any prosecutor upstate willing to explore how and whether he has violated any laws for which he might be prosecuted?

And how about our representatives in Albany? Year after year Assemblymember Markey has presented her bill. How many more years must go by before New York’s representatives have the courage to support her efforts to change the antiquated Statute of Limitations and allow our clients and others like them to seek justice?

We call on PolyPrep to do the right thing for these victims who were vulnerable children at Woodward School which was eventually acquired as Woodward Park

by PolyPrep. PolyPrep needs to hear from these victims directly in a face to face meeting to learn what they suffered at Woodward. We look forward to their response.

Gloria Allred

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June 5, 2014