

January 24, 2020

**VIA UPS NEXT DAY AIR**

The Office of the Honorable Karl A. Racine  
Attorney General of the District of Columbia  
441 4th Street NW  
Suite 1100 South  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Unauthorized and Deceptive Uses of Charitable Organization's Mailing  
and Email Lists

Dear Attorney General Racine,

We represent Catholics United Education Fund, a District of Columbia nonprofit corporation (the "Organization"), which ceased operations in 2017. Over the past several years, the former Executive Director of the Organization, Mr. Christopher Hale, has misappropriated the Organization's mailing and email lists and used them for unauthorized fundraising by an entity owned and controlled by him for his own personal, individual gain. The Organization has asked Mr. Hale to stop his fraudulent use of the Organization's mailing and email lists repeatedly, including at least once in person at a Board of Directors meeting held on October 23, 2017, and in a formal cease and desist letter delivered by Arnold & Porter to Mr. Hale on June 20, 2018.<sup>1</sup> (See Exhibit 1.)

Unfortunately, it has come to the Organization's attention that Mr. Hale has not only continued to use the Organization's fundraising and contact lists, but has done so with increased frequency and aggression over the past few months. For example, in December 2019, Mr. Hale sent a significant number of misleading emails to the

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<sup>1</sup> At the request of the Board of Directors, Mr. Hale attended the Organization's Board of Director's meeting held on October 23, 2017, at 2:00 PM at the offices of Arnold & Porter in Washington, D.C. At this meeting, the Board asked Mr. Hale to forward all Organizational business mail and emails to the Organization, and immediately transfer all access, authority and correspondence related to the Organization's fundraising and online outreach accounts (including accounts hosted on NationBuilder and MailChimp) to the Organization. Mr. Hale ignored the Board's requests and never turned over access to the Organization's online accounts.

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Organization's contacts, which solicited money from recipients and included imagery and words that wrongfully suggested Mr. Hale was fundraising for a charitable, religious organization affiliated with the Catholic Church and/or the Organization. (See Exhibit 2 for samples of recent emails sent by Mr. Hale to the Organization's contacts.) However, Mr. Hale's recent fundraising solicitations *were not* for charitable purposes and, instead, linked directly to his for-profit District of Columbia corporation named "Christopher Hale", which is doing business as (d/b/a) the "Francis Project". (See Exhibit 3 for public records of a corporation registered as the "Christopher Hale," and d/b/a the "Francis Project".) (To the best of our knowledge, the "Francis Project" is not a charity registered to solicit funds from the public in the District of Columbia, Maryland, or Virginia and is not recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt charitable entity.)

As shown in various email examples included in Exhibit 2, Mr. Hale's recent fundraising solicitation emails (and linked website) included numerous pictures, statements, and imagery related to the Catholic Church, the Pope, and St. Francis. The Organization believes that Mr. Hale intentionally used such imagery to deceive email recipients into thinking their contributions would be used to support a religious and/or charitable organization related to the Catholic Church. The Organization is further concerned that Mr. Hale's previous affiliation with the Organization, which supported policy initiatives consistent with Catholic social teachings, could mislead email recipients to believe they are making tax-deductible contributions to the Organization directly or to a similar religious nonprofit group. Moreover, the Organization is concerned that the use of a ".org" domain name ([www.FrancisProject.org](http://www.FrancisProject.org)) by Mr. Hale's for-profit corporation may give the appearance to email recipients that Mr. Hale is acting on behalf of a charitable organization and not a private company. (See Exhibit 4 for screen captures of the website for the business Christopher Hale d/b/a the Francis Project.)

As stated above, the Organization has previously asked Mr. Hale to stop engaging in impermissible fundraising activities, but has thus far been unsuccessful in preventing Mr. Hale from doing so. The Organization has also previously notified and reminded its donors and supporters that Mr. Hale is no longer affiliated with the Organization, nor has been for several years, and cautioned the Organization's supporters that Mr. Hale's ongoing solicitation requests are not authorized by the Organization.

In light of Mr. Hale's increasingly aggressive fundraising tactics, the Organization believes Mr. Hale's fraudulent practices may cause irreputable harm to the reputation of the Organization's former Board of Directors, and could also result in the defrauding of many of its former supporters and the general public. Therefore, the Organization respectfully asks the Office of the Attorney General to review this matter and take all steps necessary to investigate and stop Mr. Hale from continuing his deceitful and

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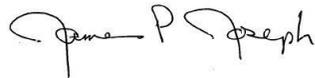
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fraudulent fundraising tactics within the District of Columbia. Mr. Hale's dishonest actions undermine the values of integrity and trust that are crucial in the charitable fundraising process.

Please note that the above summary (with attached exhibits) is not intended to be an exhaustive statement of all relevant incidences of Mr. Hale's improper and inappropriate use of the Organization's intellectual property or deceitful fundraising practices. Upon request, we are able to provide any such additional facts or evidence that may be needed to assist your Office's investigation and review of this matter. Additionally, please note that our research indicates Georgetown University has an initiative called the "The Francis Project," which we assume to be unrelated to Mr. Hale's personal business. (See The Francis Project, Georgetown University, available at <https://thefrancisproject.georgetown.edu/about/> (last visited Jan. 13, 2020).)

We thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter. If you have any questions or if we can be of any assistance in your Office's review of this issue, please let me know.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James P. Joseph". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "P".

James P. Joseph