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AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERS CALL ON THE MEMPHIS CITY SCHOOL BOARD TO BAN PADDLING

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS....Dr. Alvin Poussaint, a Professor Psychiatry at Harvard University and the Judge Baker Children's Center in Boston, known to many Americans for his work on the Cosby Show, is one of several African American leaders calling on the Memphis City School Board to ban corporal punishment and asking Memphis citizens to support the ban.

"In 2003-04, 13,804 students were paddled almost 30,000 times in the Memphis City Schools. They were overwhelmingly African American students and overwhelmingly males," said Dr. Poussaint. "This is outrageous and must stop. African American students are being hit at 2-5 times the rate of other children. Corporal punishment does not prevent misbehavior. The same kids are hit over and over. The more children are hit, the more likely they are to be aggressive and violent. It is a factor in creating violence in our communities," he said.

Prominent African American leaders have joined Dr. Poussaint in asking all school boards and all state legislatures to ban school corporal punishment immediately. African American leaders who have joined Dr. Poussaint in calling for a ban on school corporal punishment include:

Julian Bond, Chairman of the Board of NAACP
Kweisi Mfume, President and CEO of NAACP
Reverend Jesse Jackson Sr., Founder and President of PUSH/EXCEL
Marc Morial, President, CEO of the Urban League

The National Medical Association and its President, Dr. Winston Price, have joined Dr. Poussaint's initiative.

"Members of the Memphis City School Board have an opportunity to correct an injustice and to teach children that the way to solve problems does not involve violence by adults," said Dr. Poussaint.