Dear Dr. Johnson:

The National Coalition Against Censorship is an alliance of 57 national non-profits, including literary, artistic, religious, educational, professional, labor, and civil liberties groups. We promote freedom of thought, inquiry and expression for all Americans, including K-12 students, teachers, and staff.

We have read that the public address system used at the Central High School graduation ceremony was turned off before DayOnna Carson concluded her valedictorian address. According to press reports, the attendees were unable to hear DayOnna say, “No justice, no peace.”

While we accept the District’s explanation that cutting off DayOnna’s speech was inadvertent, we are sure you agree that it is important that the views of young people are expressed and heard, particularly during the current national conversation regarding racial justice. We also believe that it is important that schools and other institutions go out of their way to make clear to students, families and the public that they support the rights of all students to express themselves, regardless of their views.

We are writing to inquire about the steps that the District is taking to provide Ms. Carson the opportunity to communicate her entire message to the student body of Central High School. Given that the District in its June 30 statement described Ms. Carson’s speech as “timely” and as having “addressed some of the most important issues of the day,” perhaps her entire speech could be re-recorded and presented to the student body on the opening day of the upcoming school year.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.
Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Christopher Finan
Executive Director
National Coalition Against Censorship