

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STATEMENT OF SACRAMENTO COUNTY WOMEN LEADERS

(see last page for list)

“Come out, come out, whoever you are!”

Women leaders from across Sacramento County are joining together to condemn campaign mailers appearing over the past week, and to demand to know who paid for them. A total of three mailers attack Dr. Flo Cofer, candidate for Sacramento County Supervisor, for lying on her financial disclosure form and seeking to mislead voters in her ballot designation.

“This entire campaign attack is a vicious lie launched by an “independent expenditure” committee funded by dark money,” said Maria Madril Hernandez, president of the National Women’s Political Caucus of Sacramento, which leads the effort. “It represents the racist misogyny used by those who oppose Dr. Cofer because she is a strong black woman who cannot be bought. To the extent we can even determine its funding, the attack mailers appear to be bankrolled by some of the same interests who ran a racist and sexist campaign against her for Sacramento Mayor in 2024. They fear a candidate who can’t be bought and who will stand up against corporate and development interests that are more concerned with their own profits than the health of the community.”

The mailers cite a lawsuit filed against Dr. Cofer to challenge her requested ballot designation as “Doctor, Public Health,” and a complaint filed with the California Fair Political Practices Commission alleging she had not legally reported her income on a Conflict of Interest form.

It has become a common campaign tactic to hide behind dark money committees and sue a candidate they oppose to create a phony “issue.” The Sacramento *Bee* has already printed an excellent fact check of the first mailer (a second one is similar) and can be found here:

[Fact check: Ad claims Sacramento candidate lied about income | Sacramento Bee.](#)

The bottom line is:

- Dr. Cofer, who has a Ph.D. in Epidemiology and is a public health expert, provided documents to back up her designation request; a judge said the title might be inadvertently “misleading” and directed Dr. Cofer to call herself an “Epidemiologist,

Public Health” instead—but found NO misconduct or dishonesty on her part. This game of titles can disadvantage women and people of color, who often are not recognized for significant academic and professional accomplishments.

- The FPPC complaint, filed by the same complainant represented by the same law firm, seeks to discredit Dr. Cofer’s long history of volunteering her professional expertise to the community on an unpaid basis. She reported every penny of actual income required by the FPPC. What does it say about people who think it’s not real if professional services are sometimes provided for free?

The mailers identify the funders of the ad as the “Alliance to Support the Middle Class”—an independent expenditure committee—whose major funders are the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 340 and something called the “Sacramento Area Policy Committee”. This is all voters are told about who’s behind the hit pieces unless you know how to get to the Secretary of State’s campaign finance disclosure portal and find additional information. How many voters do that?

The most recent reports, filed three months ago, reveal that the Alliance had already spent over \$50,000 in that period supporting Dr. Cofer’s opponent, and *all* of its contributors were real estate and homebuilders’ interests and the IBEW local (a building trades union), who donated between \$25,000 and \$50,000 each. The so-called “Sacramento Area Policy Committee” had no recent filings, so how much it contributed could not be determined, but the Bee says it is tied to the legal firm that represented the complainant.

In calling out the phony attacks, Hernandez said, “We are tired. Women leaders, and Women of Color, in particular, are tired of watching our degrees, our expertise, and our years of service picked apart as if they were lies. Dr. Cofer earned her doctorate. She earned her title. Questioning it is not “scrutiny”. It is the same old message that women like her don’t belong in positions of power, and that no amount of accomplishment will ever be enough.

“We call on those perpetrating this campaign to put an end to this attack, and to publicly and fully identify ALL contributors who funded it. We call on Dr. Cofer’s opponent to disavow this attack as unfair, sexist, and racist, and to call on those conducting it to cease and desist. We understand he does not control these dark money independent expenditures—but he can speak out against them. His silence speaks too.”

“And we call on the men in leadership across our region, including elected officials, party leaders, labor and community leaders, and others, to stand with us. It should not take women asking, once again, for men of conscience to say out loud that racist and sexist attacks are wrong. We are still fighting for full equality in a society that has not yet fully accepted it. We should not have to carry this fight alone. Your voices matter here. Use them.”

Attack campaigns are nothing new, but recent studies show they disproportionately target women candidates. Sometimes they work, because they play on the old doubts about whether women, and especially women of color, are fully qualified to lead. Women are speaking up to ensure that the voters of Sacramento County see through and reject this assault on truth and fairness.

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(LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUAL WOMEN JOINING IN THE STATEMENT)

National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) Sacramento

Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA) Sacramento

Capital Women's Campaign

SEIU Local 2015

Heather Fargo, former Mayor of Sacramento

Karen Humphrey, former Mayor of Fresno

Ericka Harden, member, Natomas USD Board

Gail Hensley, Gender Parity Activist

Tamika L'Ecluse, Democratic Party of Sacramento County, Central Committee, District 1

Sandra Hazel, Democratic Party of Sacramento County, Central Committee, District 3

Diana Madoshi, Women's History Activist

Debbie Richardson, Women's Activist

Ruth McElhinney Lifelong Learner/Activist