

# Landmark Class Action Suit Filed Against Compton School District

---

## Professionals

Morgan Chu  
Ian R. Washburn

## Practice Areas

Class Action Litigation  
Litigation

05.2015

On May 18, 2015, Irell & Manella LLP and Public Counsel, the nation's largest pro bono law firm, filed a landmark, first-of-its-kind class action lawsuit on behalf of a class of students and three teachers of a California school district addressing a widespread, yet often ignored, public health crisis in America: the adverse impact of childhood trauma on learning. The complaint demands that Compton Unified School District incorporate proven practices that address trauma—in the same way public schools have adapted and evolved in past decades to help students who experience physical or other barriers to learning.

Research has proven that childhood trauma stands in the way of academic success for millions of children, especially those in underserved communities. Low literacy, high dropout rates, repeating grades, low achievement, and the school-to-prison pipeline have all been shown to have a high correlation with exposure to trauma.

Rather than taking reasonable steps to address the needs of students affected by trauma, the suit claims that the Compton Unified School District frequently punished and excluded these children in ways that have made it nearly impossible for them to succeed in school. The lawsuit seeks a remedy centered on the adoption of proven models being used by districts across the country, from the state of Massachusetts to the city of San Francisco, which recognize the impact of traumatic experiences and help both students and educators become more resilient in the face of adversity and trauma.

The Irell team includes **Morgan Chu** and **Ian Washburn**.

The case is garnering significant media attention, including articles in [The Los Angeles Times](#) and [Christian Science Monitor](#).