



Statement on Board Member Behavior

November 25, 2020

I have heard from many on the behavior of a Board Member that occurred on November 18, 2020. I have chosen to respond publicly to this matter because it occurred in a public meeting and my attempts to have this addressed by our Board Leadership have been unsuccessful.

First, some context on what occurred. The Board Member was not directing the obscene behavior toward me. It was directed at another Board Member. I did not have a heated exchange with this Board Member at any point in the meeting. I simply spoke up in astonishment to call attention to what I observed. It would be my instinct to respond, similarly, if I observed the same among students in a classroom or in a remote platform.

Second, I am very uneasy having this addressed in public. It devalues what I am proud of and believe in about Buffalo Public Schools. Since, it occurred in public, there is a history of other noteworthy unethical behavior, and my internal concerns and requests have been met with dismissiveness, gaslighting, and grossly unsubstantiated lies, I felt it was imperative for me to respond publicly.

As publicly elected officials, we have a sworn duty to uphold our BOE Code of Conduct, the District's Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct, and the NY State's Dignity for All Students Act. We should be responding unequivocally to censure what occurred and restore faith in those who are having doubts in us as an elected Board of Education.

Third, what we expect from our Superintendent, staff, and students, such as safety, transparency, and accountability, must also be expected from ourselves as Board Members. If this behavior was displayed by one of our students, there would be an immediate and serious response. In my work, I value and implement Restorative Practices as an alternative to punitive consequences. There are principles and expectations to accept and agree upon, in order to engage in a restorative approach. One of those necessary principles, is not causing further harm. In this instance, the Board Member is now denying the behavior and threatening legal action, therefore, a restorative approach cannot and should not be initiated and another response must be pursued.

Lastly, it is infuriating to me that this is what we (myself included) are spending our time and energy on, in the midst of a global pandemic when our children, families, and staff are experiencing such interruption in their lives, learning, and work.

On behalf of myself, as a representative of the Buffalo Public Schools, I am sorry for what you witnessed and the impression it has left on you. We must be better for all of you!

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