

June 9, 2020

Dear Superintendent Guerrero,

Thank you for your swift and unequivocal statement in support of Black Lives in the wake of recent, but all too common, acts of police brutality. As parents and educators in PPS, we stand ready to work together with you, as the anti-racist educational leader of Portland Public Schools, to take immediate action to fight anti-Black racism in our city, our community, and in our schools. We agree with you that “conditions” must be created to support every Black student in PPS. Below are three demands: concrete shifts in our current systems to show commitment to center the experiences of Black students, rather than a milquetoast, neutral “statement” about racism in our schools.

We know that White school teachers and administrators are the gatekeepers of white supremacy and the school to prison pipeline. As such, ***we demand every PPS teacher undergo explicit training in anti-racism, critical race theory, implicit bias, and the history of race in Portland.*** There must be language about this in the new PAT/PPS contract. A failure on the part of teachers to participate and engage deeply with this curriculum should end in full disciplinary action and potential job loss. We must lead by example and create real commitment to change.

We demand ***zero tolerance for teachers who are known racists.*** They should not be working in our schools. Students know who they are, families know who they are, and there should be a clear path to removing them from the classroom. ***We demand full support of this policy from PAT, and we demand clear language in the PAT contract regarding a commitment to anti-racism.*** We refuse to allow tax payer dollars to continue to fund the livelihoods of teachers who perpetuate racist systems and practices. This is how we stand “shoulder to shoulder” in solidarity with our Black community.

We demand that PPS and PAT use their full power in pushing a commitment from the Portland Mayor and City Council to demilitarize the Portland Police Bureau. ***We demand that PPS terminate its contract with PPB and funnel that budget directly into Restorative Justice training and staff for every PPS campus.*** Restorative Justice can be the tool through which we knit our communities together, heal our traumas, grief and anguish and allow students to thrive.

We cannot continue to operate with the same White centered curriculum, racist teachers, biased systems and then expect different outcomes for our Black students. We demand Portland Public Schools take immediate steps in re-educating our teachers, parents, and students on the racist history of our state and city. It is an enormous task and it involves a partnership between PPS and PAT in denouncing racism, both systemic and personal. There is no middle ground. To stay silent in the face of 400 years of historical trauma, is to stand on the side of the oppressor. We honor the countless Black lives that have been lost; the countless Black students who have been locked up, torn from their families and communities due to the inequities of our current educational system, by challenging racist educational policies we practice in Portland. We demand better. We support you in the fight against anti-Black racism and we will hold you, along with the PAT, fully accountable for actions.

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Members of Sabin Family Equity Group