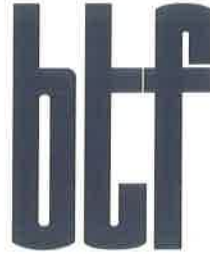


President PHILIP RUMORE



December 9, 2020

BUFFALO TEACHERS
FEDERATION, INC.

271 PORTER AVENUE
BUFFALO, N.Y. 14201
(716) 881-5400
FAX (716) 881-6678

MEMO TO: Christopher Scanlon, Councilmember, Buffalo Common Council
FROM: Philip Rumore, President, BTF
RE: December 3, 2020 Correspondence to Dr. Kriner Cash, Superintendent, BPS

A copy of your letter was forwarded to me by one of our staff members, who obtained it via Facebook.

I find your letter insulting and a reflection of someone who has not taken the time to give serious thought and consideration to the safety, health and well-being of our students, parents, staff and community.

Your statement that, "However, after nearly nine months when many districts throughout the state have returned to some form of in person learning, it does not appear to be a priority in Buffalo" is an insult to the Superintendent, School Board, District, staff and teachers.

For your information, we teachers, and I am confident the others mentioned above, think constantly about having our students return.

It is indeed "a priority".

However, the health and safety of our students, parents, staff and community must also be the priority of those who really care about our community.

You state that "many districts throughout the state have returned to some form of in person learning."

Yes, mostly the wealthier Districts have. They have much newer school buildings, a far lower percentage of their students riding school buses, far greater funding resources to provide testing, nurses, sanitization equipment and supplies, as well as other necessities to ensure the safety and well-being of their students, parents, staff and community.

I would point out that the Council has not, as was previously done by members of the Common Council, significantly increased the funding to our schools. It has only increased once in fourteen (14) years.

From 2007-2008 to 2017-2018 (ten (10) years!) our students received no increase in funding from the City. In 2017-2018 our students received a token \$500,000 increase. There have been no increases since then.

In short, although previous Buffalo Common Councils have added funding to the City's Budget for our students, since 2007-2008 to the present 2020-2021, the Council has only raised our students funding once (\$500,000) in fourteen (14) years.

For your information, 82% of our students and 91% of Rochester's students are classified by New York State as "Economically Disadvantaged". Both, for the reasons stated above, have been educating students virtually since September.

As for New York City, its poverty rate is 72%.

Perhaps you don't know, parts of our city have large populations of students and adults with asthma, sickle cell, and other dangerous pre-existing conditions. Do you care?

Much has been said in reference to the infection rates of younger students, however, we should remember that many are asymptomatic and possible unknown carriers of COVID-19.

Our teachers, as are parents, are under far more stress and working much longer hours because they want to ensure that our students receive the best education possible while ensuring that they, their parents, staff and community remain safe. This is also true of the Superintendent, Board of Education and administrators.

Your letter is an insult to all.

Anyone who makes a decision that causes the death or physical harm to a person(s) should have to explain their decision to their families.

cc: Dr. Kriner Cash, Superintendent, BPS
Members, Buffalo Board of Education
Mayor Byron Brown
Council President Darius G. Pridgen
Delaware District Councilmember Joel Feroletto
Lovejoy District Councilmember Bryon Bollman
Fillmore District Councilmember Mitch Nawakowski
North District Councilmember Joseph Golombek, Jr.
Masten District Councilmember Ulysees O. Wingo, Sr.
University District Councilmember Rasheed Wyatt

The Buffalo Common Council

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 SOUTH DISTRICT COUNCIL MEMBER
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 PEGGY SHERA
 RACHBI REID

December 3, 2020

Dr. Kriner Cash, Superintendent
 Buffalo Public Schools
 65 Niagara Square, Room 712
 Buffalo, NY 14202

Dear Dr. Cash:

After speaking with parents, teachers, and administrators, I have serious concerns regarding the Buffalo Public Schools current distance learning model and eventual reopening plan.

Let me start by acknowledging the unprecedented challenges you and educators throughout the country have experienced in the face of a global pandemic. None of us were prepared for what occurred last spring. However, after nearly nine months, when many districts throughout the state have returned to some form of in person learning, it does not appear to be a priority in Buffalo.

The best-case scenarios I hear from families and teachers are of students, who with the constant assistance of an adult in their household, are academically keeping up but suffering socially and emotionally, experiencing depression and anxiety. The other scenarios paint a much grimmer picture of students who are completely lost, have no assistance at home, or are not even logging on. They are failing to hit new milestones, let alone retain the lessons they learned during the 2019-2020 academic year. Special Education students have been denied tools and supplies the district is mandated to provide them per their IEPs.

Virtual learning is not working. Yet plans to implement any form of in person learning seem vague and incomplete, leaving many with more questions than answers. My understanding is that the current course the District is on requires schools to come up with individual reopening plans. I am concerned this will result in a lack of uniformity throughout the district, making it difficult to ensure students from all walks of life have equitable access to education. Furthermore, a uniformed standard for health and safety in all buildings seems to be lacking as I have had teachers report to me that their classrooms have not been cleaned since March.

Buffalo is the third poorest city in the United States with more than 35% of our students living in poverty. Without a proper education, these students have little chance of breaking the cycle of poverty. I fear that without a rapid change of course in the Buffalo Public School's current model, there will be irrevocable damage done to our students which will take our city an entire generation to overcome.

We must work together to return our students to some form of in person learning, but it must be done with the health and safety of every student, staff member, teacher and administrator in mind. If New York City, one of the largest districts in the country can achieve it, I know we can.

I am requesting that you or a member of your team appear before the Buffalo Common Council's Community Development Committee via Zoom on Tuesday, December 15 at 2:00pm to further discuss the concerns I have expressed and work towards a solution.

You're quoted on the district website as saying "When there are great challenges, there are even greater opportunities." I wholeheartedly agree.

Sincerely,



Christopher P. Scanton
President Pro-Tempore

cc: Mayor Byron Brown
Council President Darius G. Pridgen
Delaware District Councilmember Joel Feroletto
Lovejoy District Councilmember Bryan Bollman
Fillmore District Councilmember Mitch Nowakowski
North District Councilmember Joseph Golombek, Jr.
Musten District Councilmember Ulysees O. Wingo, Sr.
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