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March 25, 2024

Via Mail and Email

Grant Public Schools District

Mr. Ken Thorne

kthorne@grantps.net

Board of Education – President

148 S. Elder Ave

Grant, MI 49327

Re: GPS Superintendent Selection Process

Dear Mr. Thorne:

My name is attorney Katherine Smith Kennedy and I have been retained to represent a number of concerned Grant community members who have designated themselves as Grant Community Cares (GCC). Members of this group were formerly represented by attorney Joslin Monahan, who brought me onto this matter to move forward. While our group has concerns in many regards to the way the Grant Public Schools Board members have been conducting business over the past two years, (which we will be addressing in due course), for the purposes of this letter, we focus on the process of hiring a new Superintendent of the District.

I understand that Superintendent Zuver left the District in January of 2024 and that middle-school principal Kevin Akin was named interim Superintendent. I also understand that there is a significant divide in the Grant community over the handling of a number of matters by the Board. Vitriol and rancor has surrounded the Health Center debacle (regarding the existence of such Health Center and a young artist's mural in the Health Center); the process and reasons for the ouster of Superintendent Zuver,

recent elaborate investigations into supposed special education infractions that will cost tax payers significantly and have eaten into the District's budget to the tune of six figures; the intimidation and retaliation against those who speak against the Board and Board members; a lack of transparency on decisions and actions including Open Meetings Act violations, and FOIA disputes, among others. Additionally, actions against school staff and administrators by board members (or agents of board members) including posting confidential and false information on social media, have caused great distress to them and have damaged their reputations.

Despite this divisiveness in the Grant Public Schools community, certain Board members have suggested that rather than perform a thorough and critical search process for the best and most qualified Superintendent to lead the District through this climate of vitriol, that the Interim-Superintendent simply continue on into the permanent Superintendent position. With this decision, it was implied that no search for potentially better qualified and/or more experienced candidate (and one that may have a chance at seeking unity between the sides) would take place. This is unacceptable and violates the board members' duties to their respective offices.

While the Board has the authority to appoint the School District's Superintendent attached as Exhibit 1, Board members have a duty of due diligence and a fiduciary duty to their office and to the community, that they must consider when deciding the best person for the job.

The Board of Education has an obligation to the citizens of this District to employ the professional leadership best trained and equipped to meet the educational needs of their children. Grant School Board policy 1241

In GPS Board policy 1220, attached as Exhibit 2, Employment of Superintendent, it specifically states that:

The Board *shall actively seek the best qualified and most capable candidate for the position of District Superintendent.* (emphasis added).

The policy goes on to suggest using a subcommittee of the board, or outside professional consultant in the process, and sets forth recruitment procedures for either of these entities to follow. (Policy 1220 A-G).

Under the Administrative Guideline Manual, attached as Exhibit 3, a specific path and criteria for selecting professional staff is outlined in policy ag3120A. (Attached). It sets forth specifically:

The Board of Education shall make all appointments to positions on the basis of a person's professional qualifications. To implement the desire of the Board to appoint on the basis of merit only, all those who have responsibility for staffing should search diligently within and outside the system for qualified candidates to fill staff positions.

While this manual may pertain to administrative positions within the District and may not be required specifically for the Superintendent search, certainly it can be argued that as the Superintendent is the MOST important administrative position in the District, and that the Superintendent search should be *at least* as stringent a process as other lower administrations within the District.

We hope that the members of the Grant Public School District Board members take into consideration the duties they possess as board members, the Board policies in place, as well as best practices for recruiting and screening applicants for one of the most important positions in the School District. The standard for this position should not be likeability, familiarity, or that the person may be “good enough.” Students, families, and the rest of the community should be able to expect that these elective officials, the Board you preside over, do their jobs with due care and with an objective perspective for the benefit of all of this District’s community.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Katherine Smith Kennedy