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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
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January 7, 2022

Dear Christina, Brandywine, and Red Clay School Boards,

Thank you for considering our Wilmington Learning Collaborative proposal to work together to strengthen and support schools in the City of Wilmington. This letter is to request that, by your February board meetings, you vote to move forward with formally exploring this partnership.

This vote would authorize your superintendents to begin formal negotiations to develop memoranda of understanding, with the goal of creating the Collaborative. As a result of these negotiations, we hope to present you with finalized MOUs for your approval this spring. Voting at your January or February meeting to move forward does not obligate you to approve these MOUs. But it would express a broad agreement to explore this partnership to support children, educators, and families in the City.

The Wilmington Learning Collaborative model is one that we've seen work in other states. It is a partnership among City schools to work together on behalf of our children in Wilmington – and to empower educators who know best what City students need. It will create a hyper focus on the challenges facing Wilmington students and educators. We know there is work to be done across each district. This will enable a new governing board and team to focus all of their efforts on City schools, giving them the targeted support and local engagement they need.

Unfortunately, we know City students are not getting the education they need and deserve. We have much work to be done to ensure all of our third graders are reading on grade level, to set them up for future academic success. Wilmington children, families, and educators need additional support. I stand ready to offer that support – and I hope you'll join me.

In asking for your support for the Collaborative, I wanted to address a few questions we've received, and to let you know about the outreach we've done to your school communities.

Engagement:

We have taken community and stakeholder engagement seriously throughout this process. Since August 2021, my team and I have held over 100 Zooms, calls, meetings, and/or engagement opportunities with educators, families, community leaders, elected leaders, advocates, and other key stakeholders. We've been before each of your boards at least twice. We've hosted meetings for educators who work at each of the City schools. We've met with union leadership for each district. We have done school visits during the day to Warner and Bancroft, and plan to visit Harlan, Bayard/Pulaski, Lewis, and Shortlidge in the coming weeks. We've held community meetings at Bancroft, Pulaski, Warner, and Harlan that were live streamed and recorded. We've knocked on doors on the east and west side to invite families to these meetings, to hear from them about their educational experiences, and to tell them about our plan. We've presented to members of the Wilmington City Council, DSEA, and City members of the General Assembly. We held a virtual town hall with the Delaware PTA. We hosted a virtual visit for dozens of school and district leaders and community members to see how this model is working around the country. That meeting was also recorded and can be viewed by anyone.

Timeline:

We heard concerns from educators that our timeline was too compressed. We understand those concerns and have adjusted our timeline. While we still believe it's critical that we start this work now, we are proposing to make the 2022-23 school year a planning year, with additional supports for these schools, but minimal impacts for educators during that first year.

High Schools:

We have heard near universal agreement that the high school configuration for students living in the City needs to be addressed. We agree, though we want to be careful not to try to tackle too much too quickly. We believe having a short-term plan and a long-term plan will be most effective, and that the high school question should be something we look at addressing. We commit to working with all of you and the Redding Consortium on that.

Additional Resources:

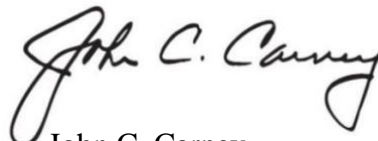
Thanks to the support of the General Assembly, advocates, and educators, significant new funding will be coming to schools across Delaware. Opportunity Funding, K-3 Basic Special Education funding, and additional mental health staff will all make an impact in schools across our state. Additionally, at the end of January, I will be proposing to add \$14 million in additional resources to help low-income students, much of which stems from recommendations from the Redding Consortium. Half of that funding will go towards putting the Redding Consortium recommendations into the operating budget, and the other half will go specifically to schools that join the Wilmington Learning Collaborative. If you vote to move forward with the Collaborative, much of the way this money will be spent will be determined by educators and leaders in the school buildings, with input from families. For example, it could be spent on more

staff and paraprofessionals for City schools, additional compensation for City educators, before and after care, and more pre-k seats, along with supporting the operations of the Collaborative.

I believe City educators are doing everything within their power to help our children succeed. They need our support. I know you feel the same way. That's what this plan is about: empowering educators on the ground and giving them support they need to improve outcomes for our children who need our help the most.

As a community, we've been debating how to help these children for the past thirty years. This plan is not perfect. It will not solve every problem. But doing nothing is simply not an option. Students, families, and educators in the City need our support. It's time to move forward, and I believe doing so collaboratively and in partnership is the only way it will work. Please join me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John C. Carney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

John C. Carney
Governor