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Senator John Walsh
Representative Stephanie Bolden
Committee Analyst Julie Fedele
Joint Legislative Oversight and Sunset Committee
Legislative Hall
411 Legislative Ave.
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Chairman Walsh, Representative Bolden and Ms. Fedele,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing on behalf of our State Board of Education. The Board's vision, mission and guiding principles represent the excellence they strive for as well as the excellence they envision for our students as they work to ensure they are prepared to lead full and productive lives in a 21st century global society. I recently spent several hours with the Board and wanted to share my perspective on that experience as well as the Board's importance in the landscape of education in Delaware.

In October of 2016, I was named the 2017 Delaware Teacher of the Year. In light of this recognition, I was invited to have lunch with the Board at their January meeting on the 19th of this month. Prior to the start of the meeting, I enjoyed conversation with board members and shared with them my background, experiences and beliefs. They were interested in my perspective as a career changer and as someone who came to teaching after many years of life and experience in the business world. They asked about my experiences in teaching preparation, how I was accepted into the educator community at the onset of my career, and how I was able to bring my passions to life through teaching. Throughout this time, they were highly engaged and interested in what I had to say as someone with a unique perspective. It was clear they were gathering information about what it was like to come to teaching as a second career. They wanted to know if I remained in contact with people I encountered and worked with in the business world. They were listening.

The meeting was called to order at 1pm. Through the use of digital tools, video recording and twitter messages, the public was able to easily access the meeting. I spoke as part of the "Educators as Catalysts" portion of the meeting. During this time I formally presented my background and experience as well as my platform regarding whole child education and trauma-informed learning. Again, the Board was highly engaged in my presentation, asking

detailed questions and providing meaningful recommendations for my platform. For example, Executive Director Johnson recommended that I include the idea of educating teaching students about trauma informed learning as part of teacher preparation in our state. Her point was salient; teaching students need to be prepared to meet the needs of students living with and learning while enduring trauma. Her thoughtful comment aligns with a key Board priority, to strengthen teacher and leader preparation, induction, professional development, and evaluation. This showed that the Board was interested in supporting the thoughts and opinions of a teacher leader; embodiment of their Educators as Catalysts program, one of their key priorities and areas of focus for 2016-2017. Another indicator of the Board's willingness to keep teacher opinions and perspective at the forefront of their work is the Board's recommendation to add the former TOY to the Board as a non-voting member.

Board member work on the Committee to Advance Educator Compensation & Careers resulted in a unique opportunity for teacher leaders to receive additional pay for leadership responsibilities. The group developed and implemented the Teacher Leader Pilot Program in 2016. The first of its kind in the nation to be implemented at the state level, it allows teacher leaders many opportunities to effect positive change at the school level. Focus is on improving instructional strategies and practices, culture, community relationships, and digital learning tools. Teachers in Delaware can accomplish these goals without having to leave the classroom and receive compensation for doing so.

By adopting and monitoring implementation of rigorous state standards, the Board ensures that Delaware is preparing students for college and career success. I have delivered curriculum and content aligned with both Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. As a member of the state's Next Generation Science Standards implementation team for two years, I worked to increase my understanding of the standards, collaborate with others to develop and pilot curricular units. As a teacher leader, I was able to train others.

The Board also works tirelessly to keep the citizen's voice in the education conversation in Delaware. By holding multiple meetings for stakeholder input on the Every Student Succeeds Act in the past year, the Board ensures that different viewpoints and perspectives are considered in developing our state's version of ESSA.

My thoughts above outline just some of the reasons the State Board of Education is so incredibly valuable in Delaware. Their continued hard work to prepare students for a productive and fulfilling life in a 21st century global society is critical. Their efforts to develop teacher leaders and to provide roles and opportunities for educator leadership are very apparent. The work to provide public access to board initiatives, meetings and education plan development is open and effective. I believe the Board is necessary for moving Delaware forward.

Respectfully yours,

Wendy Turner, 2017 Delaware Teacher of the Year