

February 2, 2022

Donald Kennedy, Interim Superintendent
Charleston County School District
75 Calhoun Street
Charleston, SC 29401

Rev. Dr. Eric Mack, Board of Trustees Chair
Charleston County School District
75 Calhoun Street
Charleston, SC 29401

RE: North Charleston Request to Leave CCSD

Dear Interim Superintendent Kennedy & Rev. Dr. Mack:

As the Mayor of North Charleston, a father of two (2) and a grandfather of four (4), I am writing to you to express my concern with the Charleston County School District's (hereinafter, "CCSD") treatment of North Charleston's students. CCSD receives approximately over twenty-one percent (21%) of its property tax revenue from properties located within the City of North Charleston. However, North Charleston's schools and students are treated as second best. Many of our school facilities are in shambles, enjoying few of the upgrades seen at schools in our neighboring municipalities. The city, its citizens, and its businesses bear the brunt of financially supporting CCSD, all while being short-changed.

North Charleston schools are some of the most underperforming and struggling schools in the district. For example, two of the City's feeder patterns perform so poorly as to be included as part of the "Reimagine Schools" proposal that CCSD is considering. That is alarming in two regards. *First*, it is alarming that **two** North Charleston school zones are performing poorly enough to require drastic re-tooling. Second, incredibly CCSD solicited no meaningful City input when developing this proposal.¹ It is commonly accepted that community change is impossible without community involvement. Yet without community input there can be no community involvement. CCSD's "decide and dictate from Headquarters" approach to North Charleston is, sadly, not confined to the Reimagine Schools proposal. North Charleston parents and elected officials have been complaining about this CCSD mindset for years.

Another obvious fact is that CCSD's athletic facilities in North Charleston are lacking. For example, the new District IV stadium, which was billed as a duplicate of the Wando stadium, fails

¹ I am baffled that this proposal was not developed in concert with the North Charleston community. It is intended to directly impact our school children and would involve an enormous amount of public funding. This one group is requesting 20% of CCSD's ESSER III funding, with no budget even having been shared with the community. Those warning signs should be enough to end CCSD's consideration of it, and yet the proposal is still on the table. On top of that, representatives from many of the affected schools have come out against this proposal, and CCSD continues to give it consideration. This is exactly the type of out-of-touch school management that got our schools into this situation.

in comparison. There is no track and Wando is not made to share its stadium with Beckham, as was promised. In contrast, four (4) schools must share the District IV stadium. To make matters worse, the District IV stadium has little, if any, storage and the locker rooms are a disgrace. Matters are no better on CCSD school properties in North Charleston. There are no track or practice facilities at North Charleston High and Academic Magnet. Both must use North Charleston City facilities.

CCSD's oversight of its local athletic resources in North Charleston provides another sign of CCSD's thorough lack of communication with the City:

- Nearly a year ago I raised with CCSD a proposal that CCSD might fund track upgrades at Danny Jones as a way of providing for our children. I received no response. Hearing none, the City reluctantly undertook a unilateral plan to renovate the Danny Jones complex. I understand that at the CCSD's January 2022 Board meeting a measure was passed supporting \$350,000 to be given to North Charleston for track upgrades. The problem is that, at this point, it is unclear whether the renovated Danny Jones complex will even include a track. Had CCSD simply communicated with the City along the way our children could have enjoyed a far better outcome.
- Another example of poor CCSD communication involves the track and football field that are adjacent to the Military Magnet school. It has come to the City's attention that Military Magnet has taken the position that the track and field are their facilities and does not allow other schools to use it. That is not a decision for CCSD or the Military Magnet School to unilaterally make. The City should be consulted. Not only is it the right thing to do for the community, **North Charleston OWNS the land underneath the track and football field.**

The purpose of this letter is to put CCSD on notice that City Council and I are extremely dissatisfied with the level of cooperation and communication we see coming back from CCSD. Though my strong preference would be to improve CCSD's service to the children of North Charleston, the city has reluctantly begun to investigate ways in which CCSD may be cast aside in favor of more competent management. I have met with members of the legislative delegation about proposing the deconsolidation of CCSD. The City is only interested in pursuing this as option of last resort - so in a sense the choice of whether the City pursues it actually lies in the hands of CCSD. I look forward to our meeting on February 15th and hope that we can discuss how the current shortcomings can be remedied while remaining part of the CCSD.

Sincerely,



R. Keith Summey
Mayor

RSK/sbp

cc: Charleston County Legislative Delegation
Charleston County School District Board of Trustees
North Charleston City Council