



June 10, 2015

To New Jersey State Board of Education members:

As president of the 1.6 million-member American Federation of Teachers, I join with the Newark Teachers Union and the American Federation of Teachers New Jersey in supporting the Newark Public Schools Advisory Board’s unanimous petition for the immediate removal of State District Superintendent Cami Anderson.

The school district’s record since Anderson’s appointment by Gov. Chris Christie in 2011 is one of failure, arrogance and lack of accountability. The superintendent has gone back on her pledge to bring “renewal” and desperately needed resources to Newark schools. She has thrown the Newark school district into chaos. She has closed her door to the city’s elected school board, its educators and its civic organizations. And she has closed her mind and heart to the voices of parents, teachers and students, who have been calling on her, ever more loudly, to halt the punitive and disastrous reform agenda she has tried to force on the Newark community.

Under Anderson’s One Newark regime, numerous schools—including schools making dramatic progress in student achievement, schools at the heart of their communities—have been closed. The superintendent’s Renew Schools have failed by almost every conceivable measure. Special education students throughout the city have been placed in schools that lack the services to meet their specific needs. Highly promising school reform initiatives such as the Global Village School Zone have been shut down, and all 12 alternative education programs designed to re-engage youth who have left school have been cut.

Under One Newark, there has been significant principal turnover; educators practice their profession in constant fear of capricious or retaliatory dismissal. The teacher contract that represented a new spirit of collaboration has been violated over and over again, resulting in defeat after defeat for the district in arbitration and a lasting sense of betrayal on the part of teachers. Finally, One Newark has now engendered seven separate complaints of civil rights violations under investigation by the federal government.

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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This is a heartbreaking list. Every item on it means lost hopes and dreams for children and parents who desperately need and want the opportunity a high-quality education can provide. It is no wonder that this superintendent has roused an outpouring of protest and a spirit of unprecedented opposition in the Newark community. But perhaps the most damning indictment of Anderson's performance is this simple fact: She has not met with the Newark school board since early in 2014. How can any conversation about education in Newark take place, when the superintendent won't even enter the room? Anderson has not only lost the confidence of this community, she has made it clear that she never wanted it in the first place. What kind of progress can be made in that toxic environment?

The AFT stands with the students and parents marching in the streets for a voice in their schools. We stand with the teachers and school staff who give their best and speak up for their students' needs every day in a climate of fear and intimidation. We stand with our state and local unions, which have made the case for real reforms—such as the community school model, surrounding children at risk with social services and other supports that foster success. And we stand with Mayor Ras Baraka, who is working *with* the people of his city to reclaim their schools and reclaim the promise of public education for all, not just a privileged few.

Enough is enough. The children of Newark are counting on us. Please put politics aside, heed the School Advisory Board's petition, and vote to remove Anderson as superintendent.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randi Weingarten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Randi Weingarten
President