

**Resolution Opposing the Absecon School District Board of Education’s Petition to the New Jersey Commissioner of Education to Sever Its Send/Receive Relationship with the City of Pleasantville Board of Education**

*The Resolution challenges Absecon Board of Education petition and instead calls for and seeks a broader and more comprehensive solution to the problem of school segregation in our region and state. One that serves the interest of poor, working and middle class communities, families and students of all backgrounds. It also recognizes the challenges, the growing diversity and the outstanding work of many middle class suburban districts such as Egg Harbor Township and Galloway Township school districts as well as the Atlantic County Vocational School District.*

WHEREAS

On August 19, 2019, the Absecon School District Board of Education voted to approve the findings of a feasibility study recommending the dissolution of the send/receive relationship with Pleasantville High School.

WHEREAS

The feasibility study, conducted by the firm Statistical Forecasting LLC, has been found by experts in civil rights, constitutional law and demographic analysis to be deeply flawed and racially biased, particularly in its false assertion that there will be “no racial impact” on either of the two school districts as a result of the severing of the send/receive relationship.

WHEREAS

New Jersey has one of the highest rates of school segregation by race and class in the nation, surpassing all the states of the former Confederacy, prompting plaintiffs to sue Governor Phil Murphy and Commissioner of Education Lemont Repolet on May 17, 2018 (the anniversary of the *Brown v Board Decision*) for the extreme levels of racial segregation by school district.

WHEREAS

A significant consensus exists among social scientists, educational experts, and civil rights scholars of the high correlation between racial segregation, concentrated poverty, poor educational outcomes, and many other debilitating social problems. And the role of public policy, not coincidence or individual choice, in the creation of high poverty and racially segregated communities and school districts.

WHEREAS

The Constitution of the State of New Jersey, ratified in 1947 (a decade before the United States Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), explicitly prohibits racially segregated public education. See N.J. Const. Art. 1, ¶ 5.

WHEREAS

Legislative leaders in New Jersey, including Senate President Stephen Sweeney, are promoting a *Path to Progress* package of legislation that includes the expressed goal of consolidating and

regionalizing schools, and not the goal of separating school systems and further segregating and isolating them by both race and class.

WHEREAS,

A May 2018 study by Rutgers University Law Professor Paul L. Tractenberg and The Center for Diversity and Equality in Education New Jersey, states that many New Jersey school districts, including but not limited to, City of Pleasantville and Atlantic City, remain “intensely segregated” by race and poverty. Conversely, the May 2018 study also states that a growing number of suburban school districts, e.g., Egg Harbor Township and Galloway Township have become increasingly diverse, thus reflecting the demographics of the state and their region. *The study quotes as follows: “Galloway Township in Atlantic County is the most proportional district in New Jersey (43.6% of its students are white, 23.1% are Hispanic, 16.5% are black, 10.7% are Asian, and 6.1% are classified as another race).”*

WHEREAS

We recognize the challenges of the existing send/receive relationship for both communities of the City of Absecon and the City of Pleasantville and the limitations of such a relationship for the purposes of addressing the larger problems of segregated education in the region.

WHEREAS

We recognize the significant social and educational challenges that exist in the Pleasantville School district. Challenges and disadvantages that are not unique to communities that have suffered from the harms of racial and economic segregation and concentrated poverty.

WHEREAS

We recognize that the City of Absecon has become a more diverse community and school district itself over the past several decades (having “above average” number of children in poverty according to the aforesaid study) just as many suburban districts in the Atlantic City metropolitan area as cited in the aforesaid study.

WHEREAS

We also recognize that the Atlantic County Vocational School District has come to greatly reflect the demographics of the region and together with the diverse suburbs provides a potential model and starting point to promote and support diverse and inclusive education.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

The Atlantic County Board of Chosen Freeholders opposes the petition from the Absecon Board of Education to the Commissioner of Education seeking to end the send/receive relationship with the City of Pleasantville Board of Education, namely its high School, on the grounds that such a move will only further the racial and economic isolation and segregation of the City of Pleasantville schools and its students thus violating our values of fairness and equal opportunity and thus violating the Constitution of the State of New Jersey.

FURTHERMORE, BE IT RESOLVED

That a broader and more comprehensive approach to the problems of segregation and racial and economic isolation of school needs to be studied and advanced in the New Jersey state legislature. Such an approach needs to end the isolation of intensely segregated districts such as the City of Pleasantville and Atlantic City; it needs to address the fiscal challenges for middle class suburban districts such as Absecon; and it needs to build on the strengths and experiences and outstanding work of the increasingly diverse and inclusive school districts such as Galloway and Egg Harbor townships as well as the Atlantic County Vocational School District.

FURTHERMORE, BE IT RESOLVED

That our legislative leadership, including the Speaker and Senate President and the Governor of New Jersey, and the Commissioner of Education, need not and must not wait for the court to impose a remedy but instead must act now to recognize and work with local elected community, education and civil rights leaders and experts to develop a comprehensive school desegregation plan that involves all communities and school districts and achieves the goals called for in this Resolution.