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The State Senate

Atlanta, Georgia 30334

January 31, 2022

Jason Downey
Chair, Georgia Board of Education
Georgia Department of Education
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive SE
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Chairman Downey,

Over the past few years, Georgia has made significant improvements within our K-12 education system across the state. These gains have been predicated on cultivating and maintaining a learning environment and curriculum standards that set our students up for future success, regardless of race, background, color or creed. Unfortunately, it has come to my attention that the recently elected chair of the Gwinnett County Board of Education, Dr. Tarece Johnson, has made a number of inflammatory, divisive, and highly controversial remarks on various social media platforms which I would like to bring to the attention of the Georgia Board of Education.

In a number of videos posted online, Dr. Johnson has stated that “we live in a society that glorifies whiteness,”ⁱ that white people are “socialized racists,”¹ that the “time has come where we end anti-Black capitalism,”ⁱⁱ and, in a message to “#WhiteAllies,”ⁱⁱⁱ that their children “will grow up and they will perpetuate the racist systems that [Dr. Johnson’s] children have to live in”³ in “this racist America.”³ Unfortunately, these represent just a few examples of the many hurtful and egregious remarks from Dr. Johnson that only serve to further divide our country and our classrooms.

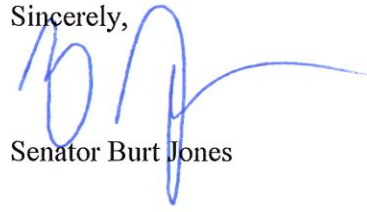
In addition, a new report has come out revealing that the Gwinnett County School District has instituted the teaching of Critical Race Theory within the county’s curriculum. The syllabus for the AP Language and AP Research Combination class reads in part: “Students will bridge the skills from AP Language to AP Research, analyzing the value of using different lenses in social criticism (Critical Race Theory, Feminist, Marxist, Psychoanalytic) to aid their analysis across issues, and the class will discuss how these perspectives apply to the different methods used by research fields.”^{iv} The syllabus appears to have been since removed from the district’s website^v—but the notion that the largest school district in our state would be surreptitiously injecting such divisive curriculum into our children’s classrooms—and then attempting to cover it up—is both egregious and completely unacceptable. The role that Dr. Johnson and the Gwinnett County School District Board played—if any—in the implementation of this curriculum deserves immediate attention.

Now more than ever, our education system needs welcoming role models who can provide guidance and assurance to students of all backgrounds, and Dr. Johnson’s actions severely undermine that mission and further divide our students and schools at a time when we need to unite and come together. For this reason, I am asking the Georgia Board of Education to launch a full investigation into Dr. Johnson’s statements, implemented policies, and administrative actions—and whether they violate any of the code of conduct policies or other statutes on a county or statewide level. I respectfully ask the Board to evaluate all potential options within its authority to address these situations regarding Dr. Johnson’s actions as Chair of the Gwinnett County Board of Education.

The parents, students, teachers, and taxpayers of Gwinnett County deserve to have a full accounting and transparency in this situation, and I am confident that our State Board of Education will afford them that.

I look forward to your prompt response and attention on this matter.

Sincerely,



Senator Burt Jones

CC: The Honorable Richard Woods, State School Superintendent
The Honorable Brian Kemp, Governor

ⁱ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vv-9L9x-WWs>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZlICwotYAk>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://twitter.com/libsoftiktok/status/1485476447531589633>

^{iv} <https://hafa.nyc3.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/assets/CRT-GA-HB-888-Example-Gwinnett-Public-Schools.pdf>

^v <https://www.gcpsk12.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=19>