

January 6, 2025

**VIA E-MAIL**

Joyce Dorse Coleman, Board Chair  
Memphis Shelby County Schools

**Re: Response to Your Email Dated – December 23, 2024**

Dear Chair Coleman:

I am responding to your email dated December 23, 2024, requesting my statement be submitted on January 3, 2025. During the Board's special called meeting on December 17, 2024, the Board voted that I would present my response to the Board as a "Committee of the Whole" on January 14, 2025, with the full Board addressing the Resolution during its regularly scheduled business meeting on January 21, 2025. Your directive to submit a response 11 days sooner does not uphold the Board's official vote on December 17, 2024, or align with Board Policy 0001, which states, in relevant part:

**All powers of the Board of Education lie in its action as a group. Individual Board members exercise their authority over school affairs only as they vote to take action at a meeting of the Board. In other instances, an individual Board member, including the Chair, shall have power only when the Board, by vote, has delegated authority to him or her.**

Given the magnitude of this situation, I appreciate the opportunity to submit a written response. However, I reserve my right to supplement this statement up to and including during the meeting on January 14, 2025, and throughout the duration of my continued service as Superintendent of this District.

The commitment of five board members to prematurely end my contract without substantiated cause is extremely disappointing. While the Board holds the authority to terminate me: I will not resign. I am deeply disturbed by certain Board Members' unwarranted attacks on my integrity, the egregious disregard for my invaluable professional training, licensures, education, and certifications, and the insulting indifference toward my extensive experience as an award-winning teacher, professional school counselor, assistant principal, principal, head coach, and central office administrator.

Despite the falsehoods and defamatory public remarks intended to damage my character and diminish public trust in me, I have upheld the highest standards of professionalism. This includes navigating attempts by current and former Board members to remove me and create an intimidating work environment—actions of which you have been aware for months—while also tactfully addressing this resulting national embarrassment brought on our city and district. Since that disheartening December day, I have set aside my disappointment and remained enthusiastically focused on the mission: accelerating the progress of our District for the benefit of our children.

To directly speak to the meritless claims, I have never, under any circumstances, intentionally or unintentionally misled a Board member or the Board as a whole. Furthermore, I have not mismanaged District funds. The two transactions at issue adhered to the Tennessee Comptroller

Internal Control and Compliance Manual, District Policy, Federal Law, and Tennessee State Law as written. Most importantly, as a solutions-oriented leader, I have prioritized enhancing internal grant management processes and fortifying internal controls to prevent similar issues in the future, while ensuring the Board remains fully informed through transparent and consistent reporting. My efforts include, but are not limited to, requesting earlier issuance of solicitations (RFP) and timely notifications, stricter deadline monitoring, and enhanced staff training on policy, grant guidelines, and reporting.

To heighten my understanding of the alleged “conduct detrimental to the District and the families it serves,” my lawyer formally asked your attorney for specific policies or procedures allegedly breached, any statements claimed to be misleading or untruthful, and facts supporting a material breach of my contract. To date – without a vote of the Board – you declined to provide this information. In the absence of such specificity, I stand by my public statements during the December 17, 2024, meeting and look forward to providing greater detail on January 14, 2025.

In your email, you admonished me stating, *“any attempts to intimidate any employee of Memphis-Shelby County Schools will not be tolerated. I strongly advise against any behavior that could be perceived as retaliatory.”* Although it is contradictory that I am the subject of a potential termination due to the mistakes and decisions made by staff members, the implication that I would engage in such behavior is unfounded and contrary to my professional record. I have not intimidated or retaliated against any employee of Memphis-Shelby County Schools, or any person for that matter, nor will I tolerate retaliation or be intimidated.

I am proud and privileged to serve the Memphis-Shelby County Schools community. I urge reconsideration of this personally driven grievance and politically motivated action, as it does not serve the best interests of our District, children, or the broader community. I remain committed to finishing the job I was hired to do a few months ago on a collaborative mission to position the District as a national model for bold education transformation.

Dr. Marie N. Feagins  
Superintendent  
Memphis-Shelby County Schools

Enc: [Emails Dated December 23, 2024](#)