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October 21, 2022

**RE: Statement from the Board of Education**

Dear Florham Park School Community Members,

The Florham Park Board of Education was disappointed to be made aware of incorrect and potentially misleading information being distributed and discussed within the Florham Park community regarding the New Jersey Department of Education's (NJDOE) mandated standards pertaining to Comprehensive Health and Physical Education.

The Board understands that this is a sensitive subject across New Jersey and in our community; therefore, we would like to proactively clear up any misinformation being distributed from those who do not represent the Florham Park Board of Education and do not have all the facts regarding this curriculum and how it pertains to our district.

The Board has, and will continue to, carefully review how our district implements any curriculum that addresses these mandated NJDOE standards. As discussed at several previous Board meetings, members of our Board do not agree with parts of these standards being mandated by the NJDOE. Therefore, before adopting any new curriculum, the Board, in conjunction with legal counsel, discussed at length the possibility of not implementing this curriculum. Given the harsh penalties that could be imposed by the state - which includes the potential loss of State funding in excess of \$1,000,000 as well as other consequences, including the possibility of the State seizing control of the district and implementing curriculum as they see fit, as well as other imposed legal sanctions by the NJDOE - the Board made the difficult decision to adopt the proposed curriculum, but committed to doing so in the least intrusive way possible.

At the August Board meeting, the Board released the following statement, "Members of this Board of Education do not agree with the state's new standards regarding the new sex-ed curriculum. While we will be approving the curriculum in accordance with our duties as elected Board members to implement curriculum mandated by the state, we respectfully request that the state revisit this criteria. We believe that parents should be the ultimate decision makers when it comes to their children's education in this space. Furthermore, we commit that we will implement the new standards in the least intrusive way possible and ensure parents always have the option to review the curriculum and materials ahead of time, and may opt their children out if desired."

It is important to note that the mandated curriculum does leave room for some interpretation at the district level, and the Florham Park school district purposely developed curriculum to address the standards as broadly as possible. For example, despite some of the misleading information being disseminated, the Florham Park district will not be amending any curriculum in this space prior to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and will be implementing any new material in the latest grade band possible (Gr. 2, Gr. 5 and Gr. 8). Any new material in this space will occur at the end of the year, and it is important to note that many of the sexually explicit examples provided by the state are not actually mandatory to teach, and therefore Florham Park has chosen NOT to teach them.

Of course, as our district has always done, we will continue our practice of being fully transparent and the full curriculum is posted online for parental review. In addition, all parents of students included in the curriculum will continue to be provided with the full curriculum and materials ahead of time, and as has always been the case in our district, parents will be given an easy opt-out option.

Unfortunately, the Board was also made aware that some in our community are questioning the character and integrity of staff members who may have their own individual opinions on this matter. Please understand, employees of the district have a right to their opinion, but those opinions should not be assumed to be the opinions or positions of the District or the Board of Education. That said, the Board values healthy discussion and varying positions on this matter, as we champion teaching our students how to think critically, to be empathetic towards others, and to be respectful of varying viewpoints. We fully support our teaching staff and administration, and acknowledge the many viewpoints and opinions among our staff and our community. However, it is important to note that regardless of their personal opinions, all teaching staff and administrators are strictly implementing the curriculum that the Board has approved. There is no tolerance for individual viewpoints or positions to enter the classroom.

Finally, the Board believes strongly in providing a learning environment that is inclusive and welcoming for all in our school community; students, parents, staff, community members, etc. We welcome productive discussion and debate on this issue and all others, and are committed to putting students' needs first above all else.

We hope that this clarifies any inaccurate information being discussed/distributed.

Sincerely,

**The Florham Park Board of Education**