June 9, 2020

Dear Billerica Board of Selectmen, Billerica School Committee, State Representative Marc Lombardo, and State Senator Cindy Friedman:

In the past week, national events have reminded us all of the systemic racism in our society and have led to an outpouring of current and former Billerica students bravely coming forward to tell stories of the racism they have experienced in our schools and in our town. We must take the stories these students tell seriously, for they reflect an important reality in our town that is often ignored. Like all communities in America, it is past time that we honestly and openly identify racism as a problem that must still be addressed.

The Billerica Federation of Teachers is committed to working to fix problems in our district that have been brought to light. To this end, we are committed to advocating for the following five goals in the Billerica Public Schools:

1. All employees should undergo professional development in bias training, culturally appropriate communication, and restorative action.
2. Our curriculum should be reviewed and changed, as necessary, to better teach anti-racism, tolerance, and diversity to our students.
3. Extracurricular groups that recognize our community’s diverse cultures as well as encourage cross-cultural engagement should receive substantial and prioritized funding.
4. The district should develop a concrete plan to recruit and employ educators from diverse backgrounds.
5. The district should develop a concrete plan to increase parent engagement from marginalized groups in Billerica.

We hope to work with the School Committee to achieve these goals quickly, but, if necessary, we are also prepared to bring these proposed changes to the bargaining table for the common good of our community.

We believe this plan will promote tolerance, diversity, and equality and make our schools the welcoming environments that all our students deserve. But for us to truly succeed our elected representatives will also need to do their part to make Billerica more welcoming.

Therefore, we are asking the Billerica Board of Selectmen, the Billerica School Committee, State Representative Marc Lombardo, and State Representative Cindy Friedman to immediately begin organizing and publicizing a public forum on race in our community to be held before the beginning of the 2020–2021 school year. Our Board of Selectmen, School Committee Members, State Representative, and State Senator should be in attendance and our elected leaders should use the information,
knowledge, and experiences gained from this forum to begin the development of a community-wide anti-racism plan.

Billerica can be an example to a country roiling with tension and hatred—a town that honestly faces its problems, comes up with solutions, and welcomes all. The educators of Billerica are ready to confront overt and systemic racism, and we hope that our elected officials are as well.

Sincerely,

David Adams
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Billerica, MA 01821

CC: Timothy Piwowar, Superintendent
John Curran, Town Manager
Beth Kontos, President, AFT MA
The strong and proud members of the Billerica Federation of Teachers

APPROVAL: This letter was approved unanimously by the Executive Board of the Billerica Federation of Teachers on June 9, 2020.