

TEENS
take
CHARGE

To: Richard Carranza, New York City Schools Chancellor

Re: Harassment of student advocates by elected parent leaders

Cc: Howard Friedman, Donald Conyers, Edie Sharp, Ursulina Ramirez, Adrienne Austin, Josh Wallack, Linda Chen, Karin Goldmark, LaSahwn Robinson, Sadye Campoamor, Amallia Orman, Carry Chan, Donaldal Chumney

July 12, 2020

Dear Chancellor Carranza,

We are writing to you with an urgent matter that deserves your full attention and decisive action.

The New York City Department of Education's neutrality on the issues of school segregation and discriminatory admissions screening is fueling harmful and dangerous online bullying of Teens Take Charge student integration advocates.

In a meeting at City Hall with Teens Take Charge and its adult allies on May 17, 2019, you described the ugly comments you received on Twitter for speaking out in favor of integration. Facing these detestable attacks, we applaud you for remaining steadfast in your mission to advance equity in our schools.

Opponents of integration have also relentlessly attacked the student and parent integration advocates who have been brave enough to remain vocal. This has been going on for months, but in the past few weeks, the harassment has reached an especially harmful, and potentially dangerous, level.

Let us be very direct. Elected parent leaders in your school system, who are public figures, have used social media to bully, belittle, and reveal private information about *your* students, who are minors.

The recent actions of CEC District 2 leader Thomas Wrocklage have contributed to a flood of profane, vile, racist Twitter comments targeting our student advocates. Instead of condemning such speech, he promotes it by launching his own verbal attacks of Teens Take Charge members. When District 2 students consistently and courageously speak up at CEC2 meetings about their negative experiences in screened schools, he belittles them during the meetings and insults them on Twitter. CEC members should treasure, not mock, input from the students whose interests they are elected to represent. Mr. Wrocklage's behavior not only embarrasses his CEC and the NYC DOE, it creates a toxic environment in which students are now afraid to participate.

CEC District 1 leader Yiatin Chu has consistently attacked Teens Take Charge and its members on social media and in Zoom meeting chats. Recently, she and several anonymous followers have singled out one of

our student leaders on Twitter, addressing him by name and posting screenshots of his LinkedIn profile page, which includes the name of his school. Ms. Chu also posted on Twitter the school that his sister attends, which, as you can imagine, caused him and his family great distress.

This repeated, unchecked, online harassment has inflicted emotional and psychological pain on the individual student victims as well as on our broader community. If you do not condemn it, we fear not only for our students' mental wellbeing but also their physical safety.

We call on you to act swiftly by taking, at minimum, the following actions:

1. **Publicly denounce** the behavior described in this letter and reprimand the two named individuals to the greatest allowable extent under current NYC DOE policy and New York State law.
2. **Amend the Chancellor's Regulations to include a zero tolerance policy** across Community Education Councils for bullying, harassing, or revealing private information of public school students, whether it be online or in person. Remove any CEC member who engages in such behavior immediately on the first offense.
3. **Sever all ties and lines of communication** with any advocacy organizations whose members or representatives are known to have engaged in the behavior described above. This includes PLACE NYC, of which Mr. Wrocklage and Ms. Chu serve as elected officers.
 - a. Refuse to meet with these groups or invite them to any NYC DOE-sponsored conversations for a period of no less than 2 years *after* the organization removes and cuts ties with all offending individuals.
4. **State unequivocally** that integration is a "top priority" for the NYC DOE as it reimagines schooling in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Send a clear signal that the NYC DOE welcomes debate about the best strategies to integrate schools but that those who defend policies and systems designed to segregate students will not have a seat at the table.

I am attaching as evidence several screenshots that depict the behavior described above but are far from comprehensive.

We expect a response from you or your office before **Friday, July 17 at 5:00 p.m.** detailing the steps you will take in response to this information. Thank you in advance for your urgency in defending our student leaders and the free expression of their experiences and perspectives.

Sincerely,

Taylor McGraw
Executive Director, The Bell

Adrian Uribarri
Co-Founder, The Bell

Tajh Sutton
Program Manager, Teens Take Charge

Kevin Beckford
Adult Coach, Teens Take Charge