

To the constituents and supports of District 4,

The single most challenging task facing anyone involved in public education is to combat the negative impacts of our nation's historical and current injustices.

Righting wrongs and finding ways to elevate those who have been chronically underserved is a fight we fight every single day. And when I say "we," I mean teachers, administrators, parents, schoolchildren, organizers, elected officials, and anyone else who wishes to see the entirety of our community flourish.

But sometimes all the stakeholders don't see eye-to-eye on matters. Those moments are bound to happen, and if you've paid attention to the local news over the past few days, you're aware that we're currently at one of those impasses.

At the heart of the matter in question is a discussion over lingering racial and socioeconomic segregation in our schools, and which future steps Hamilton County should take to decisively win on that front for the sake of our students. The good news is that there is an obvious hunger to tackle the issue. The tough part is that we still need to identify the appropriate steps to take, and then mobilize — in unison — behind that effort.

Since last Friday, I have been called on by many to issue a statement on the heated rhetoric between two critical camps in our county's public education ecosystem. I have, so far, withheld public comment, instead choosing to talk with my constituents in District 4 so I can better understand their thoughts and feelings.

In one of those discussions, a parent asked me, "whose side are you on?" My answer, to them and the rest of Hamilton County, is that I'm on the side of our students and their families. I always have been, and I always will be.

That said, there are two matters in particular that I want to address.

The first has to do with the subject of "busing." To the best of my knowledge, the concept of busing — an unsuccessful policy of the past — has not been advocated by anyone in close relation to the Hamilton County Department of Education. However, there are those who believe that to adequately address inequities in our schools, we have to consider new transportation options. I support efforts to solve our most significant deficiencies, and if enhanced transportation policy is a way to correct a problem, we have an obligation to explore the topic.

The second matter has to do with the liberal-versus-conservative language being injected into this episode. Simply put, it has no place in the discussion and needs to stop immediately. Ending school segregation is a nonpartisan matter, and we should all refuse the politicization of this debate. Politicization creates unnecessary roadblocks keeping us from resolving our most pressing needs, and we don't need to build any more barriers — we inherited enough.

The idea of keeping the status quo in our schools and continuing to ignore the real problems we face as a community goes against everything I stand for. I was elected to the School Board touting, among other things, a dedication to equity. Halfway through my first term, I remain steadfast in my belief that as we better the opportunities for our most disadvantaged, we better the community as a whole.

In short order, we've already instituted some bold initiatives aimed at alleviating the equity imbalance in our area, including the creation of Future Ready Institutes, increasing open enrollment, boosting funding for ESL students, finding the best teachers out there for our Opportunity Zone schools, and more. I am proud of these, and I promise they are just the tip of the iceberg.

I will continue the attack on inequity and the fundamental ailments giving it continued life — like segregation. As your school board representative, that will never change.

Truly,
Tiffanie