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The Baltimore Teachers Union Issues Statement on Black Lives Matter

Baltimore, MD (June 29, 2020) The Baltimore Teachers Union has issued a solidarity statement expressing support for students and community members protesting for Black Lives. The statement comes in the wake of a month of protests over police brutality, and continuing cuts to education. President Diamonté Brown says, "Without us addressing the devaluation of the Black body, we won't be able to make sure Baltimore city students have what they deserve...the first step is for more money to be available for our school district. However, I don't think that's enough. Just because we get money doesn't mean we should accept that our school district, which is an institution that perpetuates racism, will willingly, appropriately, constitutionally, and adequately allocate funding. The people who have the power to make that happen have to acknowledge there was wrongdoing in the first place...if we want to make certain that students in BCPSS, which are primarily Black students, get the education that they have a constitutional right to, the directly impacted educators and activists have to vigilantly babysit the school district to ensure Baltimore city students get at least just the beginning of what they deserve. What they deserve actually extends beyond what is constitutionally adequate."

You can read the entire statement below.

The Baltimore Teachers Union Stands in Solidarity with Black Lives Matter

As a union, our ranks are full of compassionate educators who clearly see the systemic issues of racism and violence our nation is confronting. It is our job as educators, advocates, and community members to collectively channel our energy into demanding the end of systemically racist practices within our schools, our school district, and all levels of government. We represent teachers, Paraprofessionals and School Related Personnel (PSRPs) who are fully aware of the nature of the systemic injustices our students and communities face, and we also represent teachers and PSRPs who lack this understanding. It's our obligation as a union to help build understanding within our membership about the larger forces at play that are at work in our classrooms.

We must acknowledge that the violence that has disproportionately impacted Black communities across this country for centuries has been enacted through government policies. A city that funds its police department at nearly double the rate it funds its education system is a city that has made a clear choice to inflict fear and violence upon its citizens. In Baltimore, it means our students will see the local police

force given more and more money, year after year, while they watch their teachers beg for additional counselors, books, pencils, and toilet paper.

Our students are speaking out, and educators should continue to speak out as well. Our students are valiantly leading the way as they organize marches and demonstrations, collect donations and supplies for relief efforts, and recognize from their studies that “history is repeating itself”, as one 9th grade student in Baltimore City shared recently. As we engage in this work, we must listen to our students, families, and communities about the harm that has been done to Black people by educators. Owning that and recognizing that is part of our path forward. We can't call for police accountability without being willing to be accountable in the same way for the actions of our own corrupt, racist institution.

We are the frontline workers in a racist institution. That means that sometimes our members have been put in positions where they have the capacity to cause harm. When educators are in positions of authority within a racist system, personal failings and institutional pressures can combine to produce a range of outcomes from micro-aggressions to trauma that are felt by our students and the families and communities that we serve.

We must remind ourselves and proclaim to our friends in labor across the country that we did not join our union just to protect our labor, but that we joined our union for the justice that could be had when we use our labor to fight and agitate for the greater good. As Baltimore educators, we have a duty to educate our young citizens and prepare them to fight for a more just world that will finally recognize that Black Lives Matter. We commit to building relationships with our students that create a space where they can grow and learn. We promise to support work that builds strong and deep relationships between students and educators. We must support our students as they lead the fight for justice in Baltimore because without their voices as Dr. King stated “justice too long delayed is justice denied.”

Ways to get involved:

- Let your [City Council member](#) know how you want them to vote on the city budget.
- Learn about or attend professional development on abolitionist teaching. These are a few [resources](#) to help get you started.
- Let the BTU know how we can help organize by completing the survey [here](#) by July 24th.

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