



Where the future is present.

Leslie Torres-Rodríguez, Ed.D.  
Acting Superintendent

February 10, 2017

Dear Hartford Public Schools Community,

After an extensive review, the Office of the Child Advocate has released a Report that revealed several very troubling findings with our systems for ensuring student safety in the district. The Report found problems in a number of areas, including:

- Inconsistent compliance with mandated reporting requirements when child abuse or neglect is suspected.
- Inadequate training and deficit understanding among staff concerning their responsibilities, including mandatory reporting requirements.
- Inadequate efforts to follow through when staff members engage in unsafe or inappropriate conduct toward students.
- Failure to keep the suspected child abuse and neglect reporting policy up to date and in compliance with legal requirements.

As your Acting Superintendent, a graduate of Hartford Public Schools and as a mother, I am deeply disturbed by these findings, and I pledge to put the safety of our students first and to commit to the difficult work of rebuilding our systems. While the overwhelming majority of our employees are conscientious educators and support staff who put student safety first, we must repair the broken parts of our system to ensure every student is and feels safe in school, is ready to learn and develops in a positive and nurturing environment.

Acceptance of the findings of the Report of the Office of the Child Advocate is an important first step. We have already taken action and will continue to do so. A draft Action Plan has been developed which benefited from the advice of the Office of the Child Advocate. This draft Action Plan, to be presented to the Board of Education at its next meeting on February 21, is designed to quickly address the serious issues raised by the Report. That draft Action Plan includes reaching out to partner with the Office of the Child Advocate, the State Department of Education, Hartford Public Schools families, representatives of district unions, community partners and external expertise to enlist their assistance, experience and cooperation in establishing systems and procedures to ensure that the children who attend our schools are safe.

With the advice of the Office of the Child Advocate, an independent monitor will be retained to oversee and hold us accountable for the implementation of the Action Plan. And we will be transparent in our progress through regular reports at Board of Education meetings and posting of quarterly updates on our website. In addition, we will promptly schedule a number of community forums to hear families and community concerns about the Report

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and related issues. We welcome your feedback and participation as we embark on this difficult and urgently necessary work.

Your Superintendent,

Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez

**Important note:** We understand that there may be many questions and concerns. For specific questions regarding the OCA Report, please contact the Office of the Child Advocate at 800-994-0939 or email at [oca@ct.gov](mailto:oca@ct.gov). For questions regarding the HPS Action Plan, please call 860- 200-7333 or email [Superintendent@hartfordschools.org](mailto:Superintendent@hartfordschools.org). **If you are reporting a case of suspected child abuse or neglect, or suspected sexual assault of a student by a school employee, reach out immediately to DCF through the CareLine at 1-800-842-2288 or their website: <http://www.ct.gov/dcf/cwp/view.asp?a=2534&q=314388>.**

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