

November 2, 2022

Dear Hilton Learning Community,

Our students, our families, and our community have been devastated by the actions of a person who used his position of authority to inflict harm upon our children. We are grateful to law enforcement and the judicial system for delivering justice. We also thank the professionals at the Bivona Child Advocacy Center for sharing a curriculum with our elementary students that gave children the tools to recognize harmful actions and the vocabulary to share their experience with trusted adults.

The Board of Education strongly supports the leadership of Superintendent of Schools Dr. Casey Kosiorek and his administrative team in addressing the full ramifications of the vile events at Northwood Elementary. Working with administrators, teachers, union representatives, the Board and community members, Casey and his team developed the Road to Recovery and the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Action Plan to guide the District moving forward. The plan is comprehensive and forward-looking, and we hope that all community members will utilize the resources available through this plan.

Testimony in the trial raises issues that need to be addressed, and we have already begun that process. We understand that members of the community want to see additional action immediately. But it will take time. The District is in the process of securing transcripts of testimony from the trial, which stretched over multiple weeks, and will be reviewing them carefully. Based on that review, we will decide on responsive actions. We will attempt to be as transparent as possible, but also need to work within our legal obligations to all parties involved.

We'd also like to reiterate something that Dr. Kosiorek said last week. As we look forward, our highest priority is continuously reinforcing a culture of recognizing harmful actions and reporting concerns appropriately. We take this obligation very seriously. Among steps already taken, we have put our entire staff through Mandated Reporter training and are providing additional training on child sexual abuse and prevention. We recognize the need to empower staff to support each other, and to take the essential steps needed to protect and defend our students.

We recognize that the trauma inflicted upon so many of our students is beyond comprehension; the very foundation of the school community has been shaken and the work needed to rebuild trust in the District will be difficult. We believe the Board, Dr. Kosiorek and his team are up to the challenge, and it is our sincere hope that our actions will support those in crisis within our school community and keep our Hilton students safe.

Sincerely,

Mark Hilburger, President

Hilton Central School District Board of Education