



June 17, 2019

The Honorable Keisha Bottoms, Mayor City of Atlanta  
55 Trinity Avenue, S. W. Suite 2500  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Mr. Jason Estevez, Chairman of Atlanta Public Schools  
Dr. Meria Carstarphen, Superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools  
Atlanta Public Schools  
130 Trinity Avenue, SW  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

**RE: Atlanta Public Schools stance on teachers' pay raises**

Dear Mayor Bottoms, Mr. Estevez and Dr. Carstarphen:

The Atlanta Federation of Teachers urge you to rescind the budget passed at your last board meeting, re-prioritize tax dollars and pay teachers the pay raise intended by the Governor. We understand that you have promised teachers the three thousand dollars (\$ 3,000.00) pay raise **after** the City of Atlanta gives the district another ten million dollars. **If there was no Gulch deal, would there still be a ten-million-dollar fight between the school district and the Mayor's office?** Would the district still withhold the three thousand dollars pay raise from its teachers? Therefore, we question the management of tax dollars and the priority of teachers' welfare as it relates to APS.

Atlanta school district held the dubious distinction of harvesting an atmosphere of harassment and retaliation per its teachers when they spoke out on high stakes testing. However, as the teachers' union, we have found that teachers fairly new to the district don't intend to stay, veteran teachers are trying to retire out of the district and thus are reluctant to rock the boat. Many teachers who are caught in between these groups are written up, fired or harassed into silence. We know that too many teachers aren't "happy" teachers, so they may not walk out as other cities have done. But your teaching force is calling upon us to urge you to pay them their three thousand dollars raise!

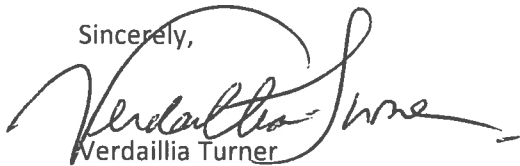
In reviewing the Atlanta Public Schools budget, huge amounts of tax dollars are being forked over to Charter School Companies, which have lengthy contracts per APS. The research and findings per Charter school performance reveals that Charters do as well as public schools, but most do worse! We have shared on more than one occasion, the evidence-based solutions for effective education and extensive reviews/research on Charter schools' performance. Yet the APS budget, which are tax dollars, continue to feed, support and grow opportunities for Charter companies. After public schools are turned over to Charter companies, organizations are being invented and set up as non-profits in order to offer wrap

around services. Why didn't APS fight for and provide wrap around services to schools in impoverished areas prior to turning those schools over to Charter Companies and or support Community Schools? One former APS board member is expected to head up a non-profit whereby wrap around services are to be provided. Has the board questioned whether this is a reward for his role in helping to marshal in Charter companies to the district?

Cherry picking any particular Charter school's progress in order to justify increased spending on Charter School companies is unconscionable. Charter schools are not held to the same standards as traditional public schools and their accountability to the public is almost non-existent. **And as you may be aware, valuable real estate is at stake when Charter schools move into districts and Charter school companies are allowed contracts by school boards.**

Therefore, we ask again, that you re-prioritize and pass the three thousand dollars (\$ 3,000.00) pay raise on to Atlanta's teachers. Atlanta, the capital city of Georgia, where you are in charge, should exceed the Governor's pay increase, not diminish it. We ask that you put teachers and their welfare ahead of any politics with Atlanta's mayor and City Hall.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Verdallia Turner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "V" and a long, sweeping tail.

Verdallia Turner  
President

Cc: Members of the Atlanta School Board