



NEW JERSEY SENATE

SENATE CHAMBERS

P.O. Box 099

TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0099

May 15, 2019

Commissioner Lamont Repollet
Office of the Commissioner of Education
100 River View Plaza
P.O. Box 500
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Commissioner Repollet:

New Jersey is an extremely diverse state. The mix of cultures and religions we see in our classrooms and our communities is one of our greatest assets and the members of our State Board of Education must understand and respect this fundamental fact. I am writing to ask that you look into Board Member Jack Fornaro's statements of prejudice.

We were not at the most recent State Board of Education meeting, but when we heard the audio recording we found one line of questioning to be extremely insensitive. Board Member Jack Fornaro asked questions of Paterson School District which seemed to imply it does not teach American History due to the large Latinx population in its schools. As proud Latinas, we are cognizant of the many ways our history is entwined with US History, as well as the immense influence other cultures have had on our nation.

Mr. Fornaro asked what historic periods were taught and requested they find out the passage rate of the classes. In doing so, he suggested he did not expect Latinx students to succeed in the course, while at the same time he admitted to his failure, as a State Board member, to be knowledgeable of basic graduation requirements set forth by the state. I do not know what the board member's intentions were in asking these questions but it certainly is cause for concern.

Given the national climate, we must be clear that New Jersey does not stand for this type of prejudice, certainly not from those in positions of power. Those in position to shape the vision forward for our schools should not harbor intolerance in their hearts for any children of this state.

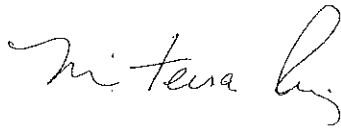
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We should take every measure to ensure that board members are trained and demonstrate cultural competency and cultural sensitivity.

Sincerely,



M. Teresa Ruiz
Senate President Pro Tempore



Nellie Pou
Senator

c. Governor Phil Murphy