

Good afternoon,

Thank you for your time and for listening. As the President of The Lorain Club of Negro Business and Professional Women Inc. and the 1st Vice President of LCABSE. During the 2016-2017 school year, I met with a middle school principle and a local councilperson to discuss the need for community support for African American male students struggling. The following was shared by the school principle:

“At [REDACTED] Middle School 37% of our African-American students are males. As of today, we have 9.5% of our total students on track for College and Career Readiness with only 14% of our African American students passing the Ohio State Test. In the past two years, 66% of all physical acts have involved African American Males.”

From this data the Boys2Men Reading and Mentoring Program made up of male community volunteers was implemented in this middle school. Here is a request from one of our mentors sent to me:

Is there any way we can get some assistance or direction as how we can effectively assist the students improve their reading skills? I truly want to help but at times I feel helpless because I do not feel I am being effective. Some of the students are probably not reading at a first-grade level. One of the students [REDACTED], says he get assistance on reading 2 times a week. I'm not sure what it entails. I think it involves sounding out words. I do not want to waste the children's time and I want our effort to be productive. I know we have just started but at evaluation time, I want a positive outcome. Some of the students need one on one attention. One in particular is [REDACTED], he is very reluctant in even trying to read in a group. He a 7th grader reading at a 1st grade level. It is totally nonsense to think the students can do well in other courses when they cannot read. We have something started, let's improve on the process and make it more effective.

Since the State takeover, I have shared with CEO Hardy “Boys2Men Reading and Mentoring model. Many of the data share at our community monthly meetings address these issues as community partners and organizations are eager to collaborate to assist with the above challenges. I, and many other club members, are so grateful that the State has taken a lead in changing the narrative of our District. The ADC, CEO, and his team model has made many positive strides that has been the reason Boys2Men Reading and Mentoring Program has not returned to the middle school this year. We can see the progress made and feel confident that we are moving in the right direction to assist struggling students.

With the passing of HB 154, we see a direct threat and dismantling of this progress that becomes more and more evident every day. If we continue to listen to the small but loud group of voices, the duties of our elected state officials are not being honored. I ask that you take a moment to look at the names and faces who are upset with the change. They represent the status quo. However, the 80% of our district that are of children of color want something different but don't have the voice to their state leaders. They have lost trust in their local leaders as they have failed them year after year. This year being no different.

Where were these local leaders during the period school years of 2012 until 2017 when according to the Ohio Department of Education website (Reportcard.education.ohio.gov), 1045 children did not graduate from Lorain City schools? We did not hear these voices. Even when some elected officials joined our reading and mentoring program and personally experienced the above narrative of struggling students, we still did not get them to sound off in the media, flood the State officials' emails and now stand on council floor.

What we did hear were the statements: "Lorain is an urban city; Lorain is a poor city and we need wrap around services."

We cannot put control back in the hands of the city officials that got us to State takeover in the first place. We must see the progress being made by our CEO and the district through. You don't know how many people are saying, "finally". Finally, someone is saying and doing something everyone was afraid to do before—step up to the power structure that has misled our community for so long. Finally, someone is exposing the mismanagement of our school district. Finally, someone is putting our kids and their lives first. Finally, we are starting to see things being done the right way. The large majority of our community are in support of this change and are finally feeling better about our schools. This is only a start and we will need more time to finally see what all of our children deserve, a quality education.

Please do not go back!

We do not need more change. The change we needed is already here.

Humbly Submitted