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Board of Education Statement re: PT/OT Staffing Issues

My name is Erin Debrich and I live at 90 Huntington Road and tonight, I'm speaking on behalf of Garden City SEPTA.

This year has seen an unprecedented amount of difficulty staffing and keeping service providers for our children in the areas of physical and occupational therapy, within several of our schools. Children who receive these services do so because there are gaps and delays within specific skill sets, such as core strength, for the ability to be able to sit at a desk all day and not grow tired, or hand strength, for the ability to write and type work. If a child is receiving these services it is because a team of people have deemed it essential and necessary for the child to successfully grow and learn.

SEPTA has been in discussions with PPS and administration about the impact of these staffing losses and we know that Dr. Sinha and Ms. Villez are aware of our concerns. We know many of our impacted members have been in touch with them as well. But we, as SEPTA, would like to publicly ask everyone here tonight what the plan is for going forward? What will the board of education and the district administration do to make sure that staffing losses and disruptions like this don't happen again? Or short of that, what can the board and administration do to put specific contingency plans in place that support our students for any future staffing difficulties? We have a large incoming group of kindergartners who have IEP's entering our primary schools in the fall, with their specific needs and goals determined: how do we ensure that disruptions do not occur to this large incoming cohort? What plans are the board and administration looking to put in place to help the students who have been impacted by the disruption to their PT and OT services this year and aren't going to meet their goals, and who may have very well lost a lot of ground in achieving them?

As parents of students who have a specific need (or two), we crave just as much routine and structure as our children. The loss of that to many of our members and their children, has produced much anxiety and frustration. We look forward, with much eagerness, to hearing what specifics are soon to be in place, or currently are in place, to support the students who have been impacted by this year's disruption to physical and occupational therapies.