

March 15, 2024

Dr. Francisco Durán
2110 Washington Blvd
Arlington, VA 22204

Dear Dr. Francisco Durán -

On behalf of Arlington's organized Jewish community, we thank you for participating in the JCRC's town hall for Jewish APS students, families and employees earlier this month at Agudas Achim Congregation. We appreciated your willingness to be in dialogue with members of our community at an excruciatingly painful time for American Jews, and the grace that you brought to a very difficult discussion.

We ended the evening with several concrete measures having been identified for implementation, all of which we believe will help address the antisemitism that has proliferated throughout APS in recent months. We appreciate your public commitment to working with the JCRC to implement these action items for the benefit not only of APS' Jewish stakeholders, but the entire APS community.

As we understand our discussion, APS is committed to moving forward on the following steps:

1. **Antisemitism training for staff during August Professional Development** - We are grateful for your commitment to including mandatory training specific to antisemitism as part of the summer Professional Development opportunity. To avoid the pitfalls experienced in APS' recent professional development program on Gaza, we would appreciate working collaboratively with your staff to identify the best training opportunity for APS educators. As but one example, our JCRC/ADL training, already provided to nearly 2,000 educators across the greater Washington, DC region, has been extremely well received by those who have participated. The training was designed to be maximally inclusive, centrist, balanced, and experiential, and it is offered free of charge. Please let us know whom we should contact to discuss.
2. **JCRC Student to Student program** - As one of our students so clearly demonstrated at the Town Hall, JCRC's peer-to-peer anti-bias program, Student to Student, is a uniquely impactful and empowering model for preventing antisemitism and encouraging greater cultural competency and mutual respect among teens. We are excited that you have directed APS staff to review and use this program. Tyrone Byrd and Sara have met to look at the best way to incorporate this opportunity in a way that builds on current learning.
3. **PD session on Israel and Hamas** – As reflected in the town hall discussion, many Jewish parents remain very concerned and angry about the Professional Development regarding Gaza that was provided to social studies teachers last month. We hope we clarified for you why the program was



problematic not only with what was presented, but also with what was omitted or misrepresented. We appreciate your willingness to share any needed corrective resources with those teachers. We will follow up with the Social Studies curriculum coordinator in the next few days to share resources and discuss options for their effective and impactful distribution.

4. Thank you for hearing, and following up on, our community's concerns regarding reports of **continued inappropriate conduct** by faculty at Washington-Liberty. We will continue to encourage community members to report every incident at any APS school, regardless of the outcome of previous investigations, so that administrators may accurately track patterns of impermissible, harmful activity.
5. We have received some good initial feedback on the new **hate bias reporting system** that you described at the town hall, and we will continue to share the information with our community. We have heard some concerns that the form is hard to find, and we will follow up with Julie Crawford about other specific feedback we have received.

We were grateful that your senior management team and high school principals were able to hear from our community as a whole. We hope that there is a greater understanding that none of these incidents are isolated, but rather constitute a disturbing pattern.

Antisemitism is the oldest hatred, and the factors that have led to the current crisis did not appear overnight. It will require an unreserved, system-wide approach, along with a healthy amount of determination, to reverse the tide. We look forward to partnering with you to reach this goal, so that Arlington's Jewish students, employees, and families feel safe and valued for their full identities within APS.

Best Regards,

Guila Franklin Siegel
JCRC Associate Director

Sara Winkelman
JCRC Director of Education Programs & Services

Cc: Arlington School Board
Dr. Julie Crawford
Mr. Brian Stockton
Dr. Kimberly Graves