



Joint letter from Georgia organizations, community leaders, and elected officials in support of Dr. Tarece Johnson, chair of the school board in Gwinnett County, GA.

We, the undersigned organizations, activists, and elected officials, are coming together to take a stand for our children. They deserve better than what the current political climate is affording them. We are alarmed at the treatment of Dr. Tarece Johnson, Gwinnett County's first Black woman to serve as School Board Chair. We issue this statement in support of her and condemn those who are leading a campaign of misinformation and disinformation about her history and intentions for the Gwinnett County school board and the community of Gwinnett County.

Dr. Johnson, first elected in 2020 and inducted in 2021, has been a staunch advocate for students, parents and stakeholders. She believes we must all work together to make the most diverse and populous school district in the state better serve our children. Many families move to Gwinnett county because the schools represent some of the most culturally rich and diverse areas of Georgia. They should not be met with divisive policies and personal attacks against the leaders fighting to make the county an even better place to raise children and call home. Doing what's best for our children is not a partisan issue and neither is our support for Dr. Johnson. While all Georgians may not agree on every issue, we must remain committed to treating our leaders with respect. Since assuming the role as member and now chairwoman of the school board, Dr. Johnson has received many alarming threats to her safety and her children's safety. Serving in a public capacity is a sacrifice; a sacrifice that requires time, dedication and commitment to fellow Georgians. Dr. Johnson and her children deserve to live in a Georgia

where a difference of opinion does not make her a target in efforts to gain political power. We must give Dr. Johnson an opportunity to raise her children without fear and concern for her safety. The Georgia we all strive to build is one where we can have a respectful debate without inciting violence and defaming one's character.

Furthermore, we must respect her on merit. She is a multicultural, multilingual and multi-degreed leader who invested years of study to be an effective change agent. She earned a BA from La Universidad del Sagrado Corazón, a MPA from Columbia University, a MBA from Emory University and a doctorate degree in Education. She is an entrepreneur and former owner of a nonprofit school. She is a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) professional with over 22 years of experience. Additionally, she teaches Jewish values (history, culture, and religion) at her synagogue. Dr. Johnson is an artist and author of several published books. The personal attacks on this highly educated, qualified, creative, and talented leader are appalling.

The ongoing attacks have taken us from a conversation that centers the education of our children to erroneous allegations and personal attacks that threaten the safety of our leaders.

It is never acceptable for colleagues and fellow elected leaders to make false, disparaging public comments that are unfounded and meant to fuel a disinformation campaign. Citing social media posts as “evidence”, Senator Bert Jones suggests that Dr. Johnson's commentary and critique of systemic racism somehow conflicts with her role on the school board. He has called for a baseless investigation and is using politics to garner support for his campaign for lieutenant governor this year. These bad faith attacks are emblematic of a larger problem that we've seen arise with Black school board members and education professionals across the country for their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in schools. We take a stance against anti-blackness and the attempt to dilute the voices of BiPOC communities. We need all of our voices to make Georgia a stronger, better state and that inclusion must happen at all levels of government

Additionally, the role of the school board is not to impact curriculum in schools but rather to serve as a liaison between the community they were elected to represent and its schools. School boards provide governance and oversight, monitor fiscal responsibilities and budgets, and help to incorporate the community's vision into education policies. We trust our voters to decide who is best suited for the role and support the leadership elected by Gwinnettians. Dr. Johnson has the support of Gwinnett County voters evidenced by her election where she won 66% of the vote.

As this election year ramps up, we call on elected leaders to act with integrity of their public office and treat colleagues with respect. There is no space for baseless tactics intended to win support and make headlines at the expense of democracy and an elected official's reputation.

Signed,

Britney Whaley, Georgia Working Families Party
Aimee Castenell, Georgia Working Families Party
Fallon McClure, Georgia Working Families Party
Representative Jasmine Clark, Georgia General Assembly
Representative Marvin Lim, Georgia General Assembly
Representative Rebecca Mitchell, Georgia General Assembly
Karen Watkins, Gwinnett County School Board
Xaviera Pace, Absolute Fitness
Vyanti Joseph, Asian American Advocacy Fund
Victoria Raggs, Atlanta Jews of Color Council
Dawn O'Neal, Atlanta Radical Art
Lovette K. Thompson, BAJI
Devin Barrington-Ward, Black Futurists Group
Cliff Albright, Black Voters Matter Fund
Helen Butler, Coalition for the People's Agenda
Tracee Brown, Connection Advocates 2 Edu
Ami Bradford, Constituency

Jason B. Allen, Educational Entities, LLC
Michael Baron, DO, Emory at Rockbridge
Hillary Holley, Fair Fight Action
Brionte McCorkle, Georgia Conservation Voters
Jeff Graham, Georgia Equality
Adelina Nicholls, Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights
Abeeha Bhatti, Georgia Youth Justice Coalition
Adunni Noibi, Georgia Youth Justice Coalition
Alex Ames, Georgia Youth Justice Coalition
Lily Littrell, Georgia Youth Justice Coalition
Yana Batra, Georgia Youth Coalition
Anthony Downer, Gwinnett Educators for Equity and Justice
Michelle Ramos, Gwinnett Educators for Equity and Justice
Penny Poole, Gwinnett NAACP
Leslie Z. Ramirez, House of Ramirez
Barbara Nesin, Independent Individual
Martha Shockey, Indivisible GA 04
Mary Lee-Szymanski, Indivisible Marching Buddies of Atlanta
Andre Parker, MOACR
Julian Rose, Movement 4 Black Lives Atlanta
San Shakur, Movement 4 Black Lives Atlanta
Richard Rose, NAACP Atlanta Branch
Nehemiah D. Frank, National Parents Union
Marla Cureton, No Safe Seats/All the Damn Seats
Nir Levy, OneTable
Britney Edge, Pansoc-ATL
Michelle Sanchez, Poder Latinx
Porchse Mitchell, Reformativ Action Nationwide Task Force
Kimberlyn Carter, Represent GA Action Network, Inc.
Chris Baumann, SEIU Workers United Southern Region
Aisha Dukuly, Students for Equity, Editor in Chief
Ann LaFavor, The Family Gwinnett
Andy Morgan, The Morgan Law Group, P.C.

Peter Berg, The Temple

Deborah Scott, We Vote. We Win.