

Mayor Fiorentini, and members of the School Committee:

My name is Dr. Noemi Custodia-Lora.

Almost a year ago, August 15, 2019, 70 plus Haverhill residents of color came before the School Committee to testify that there were only 5 Latino teachers for over 2700 Latino students. There were only 2 African American Teachers and 2 Asian teachers. Of all the teachers in our school system only 2% were teachers of color for a student population that was 40% students of color.

The School Committee unanimously endorsed the formation of a Diversity Committee to address this tremendous imbalance.

Some were skeptical as to whether teachers of color were available or would want to teach in Haverhill.

But with the hard work of Superintendent Marotta and Human Resources Director McArthur, we have made some real gains. We went from 9 teachers of color to 15. But the size of the minority student population grew to 45%. That means that the gap between students of color and teachers of color remains enormous. And without more gains it will continue to widen.

Clearly, there is much more work to be done.

The Diversity Committee has developed clear strategies for how to continue on this path to increase our numbers and percentages of teachers of color. To that end we submit the attached plan and request the School Committee's approval.

But this is not just about numbers and percentages. Now more than ever, we have seen across our country how racial disparity remains a major blight and diminishes all of us. Our children must grow up in a society that says clearly that all of us can be and do great things in life regardless of the color of our skin, our race, our ethnicity. Our children will only see and experience that if they see actual teachers at the front of the classroom who are people of color. This will strengthen both our school system and our city.

A strong and diverse School System makes for a strong and vibrant city. That is surely what we all want. Thank you