

**Subject:** Fwd: Concerns with Letter involving PTO and named Officers - FYI

**Date:** January 13, 2024 at 12:34 PM

**To:** njoly@bhpsnj.org, Sai Bhargavi Akiri sbhargavi@bhpsnj.org, Khanna, Dipti dkhanna@bhpsnj.org, Foregger tforegger@bhpsnj.org, Jordan Hyman jhyman@bhpsnj.org, Gale Bradford gbradford@bhpsnj.org, Angela Penna apenna@bhpsnj.org, Stanley, Pamela pstanley@bhpsnj.org

**Cc:** daryl.palmieri@doe.nj.gov, BHCW TEAM team@bhcw.io, ajuskiewicz@bhpsnj.org

Good afternoon.

Below is a series of screen shots sent to me from an educator in this community, originally sent from Gale Bradford. Included in the screenshots are a personal email from Ms. Bradford in addition to a cover letter for a petition for Angela Penna for President for the BOE, in which Ms. Bradford is personally seeking signers.

**There are members in our community, who are named in the cover letter, who serve as leaders of volunteers organizations through appointment or election, who were unaware of the document being circulated, and did not provide consent to being on the document.**

N.J.S.A 18A:12-24.1

- c. I will confine my board action to policy making, planning;
- e. Nor take any private action that may compromise the board;
- f. I will refuse to surrender my independent judgement;

**Ms. Bradford enlisting the public to support her personal interest undermines the public trust in the Board of Education.**

Most troubling is that she asserts that a woman with a full time job cannot fulfill the role of Board President. This wasn't an issue with our prior male Presidents, who both had full time jobs. What message is this sending to the young women and girls in our schools and our community, coming from a member of their Board of Education?

Thank ou for our time,

Begin forwarded message:

**Subject: Concerns with Letter involving PTO and named Officers**

**Date:** January 13, 2024 at 12:12:01PM EST

**To:** Berkeley Heights PTO <berkeleyheightsppto@gmail.com>

**Cc:** Angela Penna <apenna@bhpsnj.org>, Gale Bradford <gbradford@bhpsnj.org>, BHCW TEAM <team@bhcw.io>

Good afternoon.

I wanted to bring the letter attached to your attention as it has been circulating around town and will ultimately be sent to the county Superintendent as the cover letter to a petition in support of Angela Penna for Board President.

At this time I am not aware who the original author is, but I can tell you Ms. Bradford, Board of Education member, has been circulating this document in a personal email asking for signatures. Both email and letter are attached, below.

I am sharing this with you as it references not only the PTO, but specific Officers within the PTO, and makes a direct connection to the organization and the individuals listed as being in support of only Ms. Penna as President, due to your 'deep and respectful relationship.'

The BH PTO and its Officers are expected to be neutral, especially concerning matters pertaining to and involving individual members on the Board of Education and general board business. Although the letter does not make implications or accusations about other Board Members, the email that was sent with this letter, by Ms. Bradford, alleged Ms. Khanna is not fit for the role, and the reasoning was biased and inaccurate.

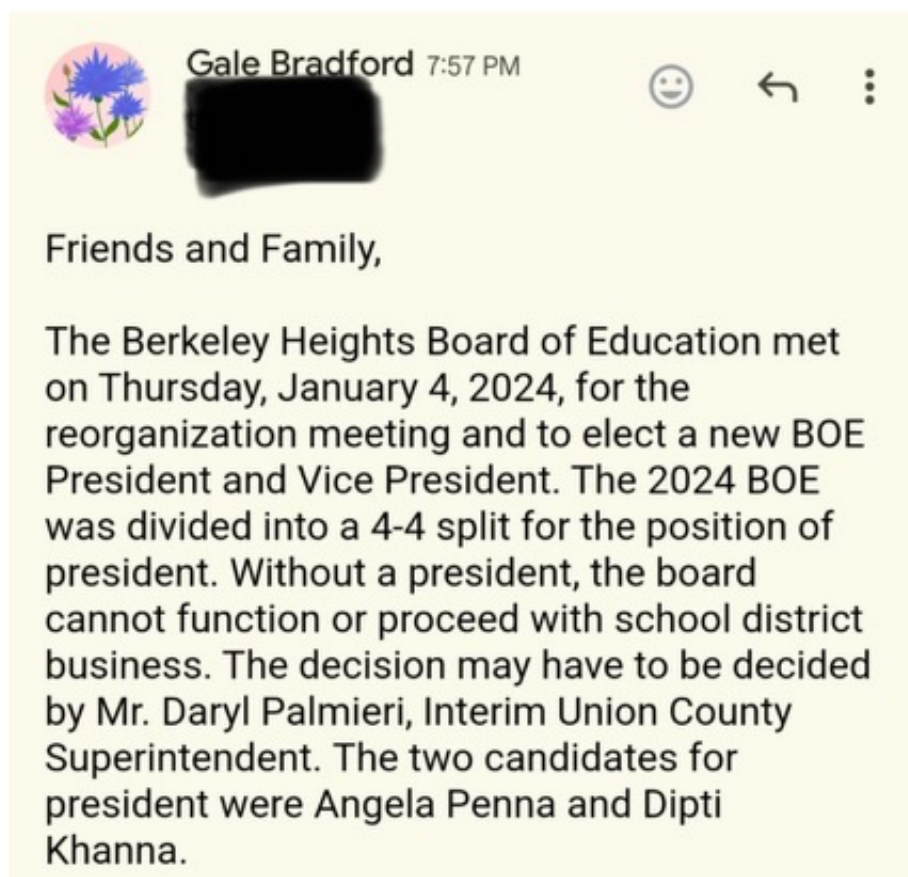
**There are individuals named in this letter, and associated with their roles within our community, who were unaware and did not consent to being part of this letter, which is quite concerning.**

I am not asserting anyone in the BH PTO has been involved in wrongdoing, or even given permission for being named and listed in this letter. In light of this letter's connection to the PTO organization, and the organization's commitment to neutrality, I wanted you to be aware of this document being circulated. It would be in the best interest of the PTO organization to disassociate with this letter or any matter involving Board business.

I do find it to be contradictory to BHPTO ByLaws and purpose to have the PTO organization and named Officers being directly connected to this letter, which will be a public document once it is sent to Mr. Palmieri. This is truly a matter of Board business and no outside organizations, especially those so closely involved in our schools, should be involved or attached to a single campaign.

**Letters like this**, from elected representatives tied to other elected and appointed representatives within our community organizations, **undermine public trust** and should be avoided at all costs.

Thank you for our consideration,



I am looking for your willingness to sign a petition in support of Angela Penna for president of the BOE. The petition with your name and address will be sent to Mr. Daryl Palmieri, Interim Union County Superintendent on Monday, January 15, 2024. I have served with both candidates this past year. I will tell you my reasons for supporting Angela, and you can decide to sign the petition or not.

Angela Penna and Dipti Khanna, as all board members, are volunteers and serve the community without payment.

Angela Penna has contributed to the Berkeley Heights community in many capacities for years, including our P.T.O. She volunteered and ultimately was elevated to P. T.O. District President for years. She is currently serving her fifth year on the board. She has served as a member or as the chairperson of each of the committees over her five years. She has served as Vice President of the Berkeley Heights School Board and then last year as President of the Board, each time elected unanimously. She has completed the required workshops and training to be a school board member in New Jersey. Her professional job allows her flexibility to meet with community members, town council members, staff and administrative members during the school day.


Dipti Khanna was elected to the board last year and has served one year. She has served as a member of several committees this year. She is still working on completing the required workshops and training for a first year NJ school board member. Her professional job is in the field and she has missed board of

education committee meetings due to work.

("Her professional job is not flexible and she has missed board of education committee meetings due to work.")

I thank you for your support of the Berkeley Heights Board of Education and our students, Gale

The petition to Mr. Daryl Palmieri, Interim Union County Superintendent is attached.

 Letter supporting Angela Penna.doc

Please share and invite other adults in your household, Berkeley Heights family, or neighborhood to join this petition.

I ask that you email me back with your consent to add your name and address to the petition. Copy and return email to [gale.bradford@gmail.com](mailto:gale.bradford@gmail.com)

10:17

Messages

← Letter supporting Angela Penna...

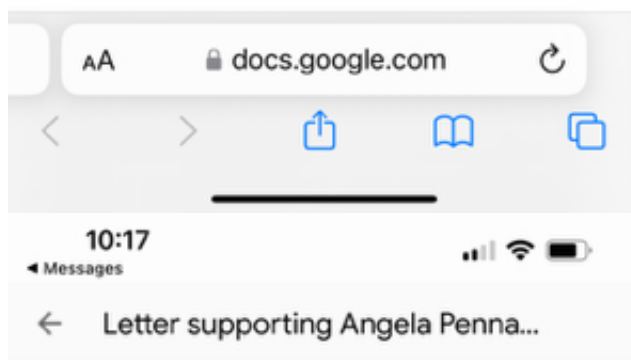
Dear Mr. Daryl Palmieri:

This letter is to communicate to you our strong support for Mrs. Angela Penna for President of the Berkeley Heights Board of Education (BOE).

Mrs. Penna has been a member of the BOE for the past 4 years. During her tenure she served as President of the Board in 2023 and as Vice President in 2022. She has also served on and chaired multiple committees of the Board including the Finance & Facilities Committee, the Curriculum Committee, the Athletics/Co-Curricular Committee, the Technology & Communications Committee, and the Personnel Committee. Before her election to the BOE, Mrs. Penna spent many years as a member of the Berkeley Heights Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and served as its District President from 2017 until 2019. Prior thereto, she also served as President of the PTO for a number of our town's individual schools from approximately 2010 to 2016. Her

individuals serve from approximately 2010 to 2018. Her knowledge of and experience with the various issues facing our district and her commitment to the students of this town has been more than proven by her outstanding volunteer track record.

Not only does Mrs. Penna have the requisite experience to continue on as Board President, she has consistently demonstrated the calm, steady temperament and the fortitude necessary to effectively lead Board business and community related affairs, especially in difficult times when tough decisions may be required. She has also developed deep and respectful relationships with key constituents in Berkeley Heights including the Mayor (Mrs. Angie Devanney), the President of the PTO (Mrs. Debbie Terrero), the President of the Berkeley Heights Education Foundation (Mrs. Daniela McDonnell), the President of the Berkeley Heights Education Association (Mrs. Marcy Helmstetter), and the President of the Mountainside K-8 Board of Education (Mrs. Vivian Pupo), among others.



In order for the Berkeley Heights BOE to govern going forward and serve the community in a positive way we need someone at the helm with demonstrated leadership experience and that person is Mrs. Penna. There is no other individual currently serving on the Board with her extensive background and knowledge which will be especially critical as the district begins its search for a new Superintendent, arguably the most important responsibility of any Board of Education. In addition, after witnessing the contentious BOE reorganization meeting of January 4, 2024, Mrs. Penna's level-headed demeanor and collaborative management style will be essential in order for the Board to accomplish its goals in 2024.

In closing, we recognize that there are many important issues facing Berkeley Heights in the days and months ahead which is why we urgently need someone like Angela Penna to stay the course as our community sorts through our challenges — and our differences. Accordingly we ask that you appoint Mrs. Penna as President of the Berkeley Heights BOE as quickly as possible.

Respectfully yours,

