



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OCSD Change.org Petition Statement

OCEAN CITY, NJ (April 23, 2021) – The Ocean City School District first became aware of the allegations of unsafe and unjust practices at Ocean City High School published in the change.org petition when that page was posted on April 22. The District immediately reached out to the Ocean City Police Department to request their review of the allegations and to offer our cooperation in any manner that was necessary. The Ocean City Police Department and the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office are in the process of reviewing the allegations contained in that petition to determine their origin(s).

The physical safety and mental well-being of our students have always been among the Ocean City School District's foremost concerns. The District has consistently maintained and enforced all anti-harassment, intimidation and bullying policies required by the Department of Education, as well as all reporting obligations for any student who is suspected to have been abused, neglected and/or missing. Any alleged incidents of harassment, intimidation and bullying are taken seriously and investigated consistent with the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act.

Ocean City School District has also taken additional proactive steps and initiated innovative programs to help our students and staff feel included, secure and comfortable throughout the school day – in class and in extracurricular activities. For example, in 2015, the District formed an Ad-Hoc committee on Youth Mental Health to support student wellness in all our schools. The committee developed a layered plan to promote youth mental health awareness, with key action steps including the adoption of the Lifelines curriculum into OCHS health and PE classes and implementation of the STOPit app. This technology enables students to anonymously ask questions of professionals or report a friend in need of intervention.

Among the more recent proactive steps taken are the renovations and transformation of classrooms in the High School and Intermediate School into wellness centers, where students can seek respite or confidential advice and assistance from trained staff members.

Ocean City School District takes seriously its responsibility to create a supportive school community. We are committed to fostering a culture that supports the whole student and ensures each student's safety, security and mental and physical health.

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