

Statement from the Orange Democratic Town Committee Executive Committee in response to a recent letter from the ORTC to the Amity BOE

At their February 20th meeting, the Orange Republican Town Committee (ORTC) endorsed a letter to be sent to the Amity Board of Education addressed to Chairman Paul Davis, and Superintendent Dr. Jennifer Byars, that called on them to comply with recent federal mandates “that emphasize the Constitution and our laws’ prohibition of discriminatory and divisive educational hiring and programs.” The letter does more than that. It threatened that if two programs related to fostering diversity were not immediately ceased, the district could be subject to “formal reporting on this matter to the office of Civil Rights, for investigation and enforcement action,” that could lead to our district losing our federal funding and being subject to financial and legal consequences. Are the Orange Republicans threatening to see to it that Amity loses funding?

We also find it interesting that the letter quoted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We wonder what he would think of the Orange Republicans using his words, but with such a misuse of his message.

Don’t be fooled by ORTC Chairman Dominick Lombardi’s claim that the letter is a “decisive action to defend academic excellence in the community.” This action taken by the Orange Republicans is not out of any concern for our Amity students, it is a page out of a national Republican playbook, and the Orange Republicans don’t have our school’s interests at heart. Here in the Amity district, we have an award-winning and highly ranked school system that offers students of all backgrounds an exceptional education. How have policies related to diversity, equity and inclusion hurt Orange? Where's the victim? And what's the alternative? Are we going to pretend that there's no such thing as a long history of discrimination against marginalized groups? Is it really a bad thing if the school seeks out teachers who reflect the diversity of our own community? Isn't diversity of thought and experience what makes for a stronger community and learning environment? It seems that the Orange Republicans don't understand what DEI truly is and instead are latching on to fear mongering talking points. Why are the Orange Republicans afraid of diversity and what does that say about how they welcome marginalized peoples to our town? Lombardi mentions that "opportunity should be based on merit, not race," which is exactly what DEI is about. It isn't about favoring one race over another but providing equal opportunity for all.

Furthermore, in the last election, all three Amity towns voted for Harris. The majority here favor DEI initiatives. Trump won nationally by plurality, not majority. His policies do not enjoy an

overwhelming mandate. Amity should educate our children as the majority of our citizens see fit, and we trust our teachers, elected Board of Education members, and administrators to make the right decisions for our students so that all are given the best chance for success. Withholding federal funds from schools who do not conform to unpopular mandates is extortion by minority. If the majority does not comply, either local taxes will go up, or the schools will be underfunded. That will be a major loss for our district and the Orange Republicans are too blinded by a national political agenda to care.

Signed

Jody Dietch, Chair

Melissa Johnston, Vice Chair

Patricia Sanders Romano, Treasurer