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VIA E-MAIL & VIA UPS OVERNIGHT MAIL

March 16, 2018

The Honorable Susan Scarola, ALJ
Office of Administrative Law
9 Quakerbridge Plaza
P.O. Box 049
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Re: Alcantara, Leonor, Individually and as G/A/L for E.A. et. als.

v.

Hespie, David, Comm. of Ed., NJ State Bd. of Ed. & NJ Dept. of Ed.

OAL Dkt. No.: EDU-11069-2014 S / Agency Ref.: 156-6/14

Dear Judge Scarola:

As Your Honor is aware this office represents the interests of the Lakewood Township Board of Education as of August 17, 2017.

I have been requested by the Superintendent of Lakewood Schools, Laura Winters, and the Lakewood Board of Education to immediately forward this correspondence to Your attention.

Unfortunately, while the district's role herein was limited to that of a "participant" prior to my being retained by the Board, it is my client, the children of Lakewood Public Schools, who have the most to lose if this elongated matter continues unabated.

It should be noted that the undersigned has had the privilege of appearing in front of Your Honor on countless occasions and the frustration of the Lakewood Board of Education is not directed at this Court but the obvious delay tactics being utilized by the New Jersey Department of Education, despite, in part, the following:

1. Despite the two (2) dedicated State Monitors Lakewood Public Schools are "**crumbling**";
2. Despite the valiant efforts of two (2) State Monitors that the district's financials are and continue to drastically plummet;
3. Despite the entire population of Lakewood being one of the most highly "taxed" in Ocean County, both the public and non-public populations of Lakewood are suffering;
4. Despite all of the above, Lakewood Public Schools and its dedicated staff continue "to plug away" at helping a

student population that is most challenged and qualifies

100% for free and reduced lunch;

5. Despite assurances that “SFRA” and EXAID funding would be “whole” (i.e., fully funded) the Lakewood School District, as a result of not being fully funded *as announced earlier this week*, has been caused to endure a “hit” of \$6,251,269 as a result of both of the aforementioned categories not being fully funded;
6. Despite the best efforts of the Superintendent and her staff, the district *is already* experiencing “flight” (i.e., teachers are already resigning and fielding other job opportunities in other districts, etc.) due to the district’s uncertain financial future;
7. Despite an “all-out effort” to employ staff for Lakewood Public Schools that would meet our “unique” student population, at current, we cannot attract/fill the following positions: two (2) Bilingual teachers; two (2) Math teachers; seven (7) Special Education teachers; three (3) Bilingual Child Study Team members, etc.;

8. Despite the Board’s willingness and appreciation for our public school staff whose contracts expire on June 30, 2018 we are unable to negotiate in “good faith” as we have not been provided by the State (despite repeated requests) with available funds for possible staff raises;¹
9. Despite the State Monitors testimony that the district has a revenue problem, **not** a spending problem, the New Jersey Department of Education has *failed* to recognize same by providing a mere \$239,000.00 in increased funding for the 2018-2019 school year despite a projected increase of approximately 3,500 plus students.

Lest there be any misunderstanding the district’s “perils” are well known for the upcoming year (2018-2019) as evidenced by the State Monitor’s recent acknowledgement that the district will be “short” more than \$28-31 million dollars for the 2017-2018 school year.

Delay is no longer an option.

The MOTION filed by Petitioners must be immediately heard.

¹ Please note that the Ocean County average is 3% as to salary increases, and, surely no one can dispute that our public school staff require monetary recognition for their valiant efforts with regard to the most economically depressed and “needy” student population in the County.

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The children of Lakewood need help now!!!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael I. Inzelsbuch, Esquire
MICHAEL I. INZELBUCH, ESQ.

MII/sn

cc: Arthur Lang, Esquire (for Petitioner)
Paul Trachtenberg, Esquire (for Petitioner)
Daniel Louis Grossman, Esquire (for Petitioner)
Jennifer Hoff, DAG (for Respondent)
Geoffrey N. Stark, DAG (for Respondent)
Laura Winters, Superintendent of LBOE

Dictated Only