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**Akron Education
Association**

Press Release

Teachers Union Condemns District's Mishandling of Serious Safety Threat at I Promise School

Akron, OH, Tuesday, 9/17/24:

Akron, OH, September 17, 2024: Patricia Shipe, President of the Akron Education Association (AEA) representing licensed and certificated employees of Akron Public Schools, has released the following statement:

The Akron Education Association (AEA) is deeply troubled by the Akron Public School (APS) District's failure to appropriately address a grave safety incident at the I Promise School. Last week, a hit list titled "death note" was discovered in a classroom identifying 22 teachers and 30 students as targets. Even after identifying the student who wrote the list, and despite the severity of this threat, the school administration allowed the student who created this hit list to continue attending classes. It is our belief that the building principal remained in administrative meetings at central office while assistant administrators ignored safety protocols, did not notify law enforcement, and did not notify the teachers or the families of students who were listed on this "death note".

The district downplayed the situation from the outset, characterizing the student's actions as a "playful gesture," and failed to conduct a proper threat assessment in accordance with the Board's own policies. The student responsible for the list continued attending classes, not even being removed from the building while the investigation proceeded. Furthermore, it was only after media inquiries that the district released a letter to staff and families, a full seven (7) days after the incident. This letter grossly misrepresented the facts, claiming that only "some" staff and scholars were identified when, in reality, 52 names were listed. Moreover, it was only after these media inquiries, and a full week after the student was allowed to continue attending classes, that the administration finally suspended the student for ten (10) days.

This incident, and the district's efforts to minimize its significance are not only reckless, but also represent a clear violation of the trust that staff and families place in APS leadership. The AEA has conducted its own investigation and uncovered numerous failures in protocol and communication. The district's initial handling and response to this serious safety incident appears to prioritize public relations over the safety of students and staff.

While AEA and its educators are committed to seeking resources for any of our students who struggle with finding supports to address inappropriate behaviors, school violence is an all-too-frequent reality across the country, threats—whether perceived as jokes or not—must be taken seriously. The APS district's disregard for its own code of student behavior and the safety of those involved is unacceptable. The Akron Education Association demands immediate action to rectify the situation, including a full and transparent review of the incident and the district's mishandling of it. We also urge the district to implement stronger safety protocols to ensure all employees are thoroughly trained and that the Administration actually follows the Board's Threat Assessment and Intervention policy, including the formation of required threat assessment teams at each building. Hopefully these measures will ensure that all future threats are addressed promptly and properly, with clear and timely communication to staff and families.

We cannot allow such serious situations to be swept under the rug for the sake of public image. The safety of our students and staff must always come first, and the AEA stands firmly against any attempts to downplay or ignore threats to our students, staff, and schools.

For Immediate Release