

RIK MEHTA

FOR  US SENATE

July 17, 2020

Mr. Al Beaver
Director – NJEA Government Relations
180 W. State St.
Trenton, NJ 08607
beavera@njea.org
cc: Ms. Mary Kemery
mkemery@njea.org

Dear Mr. Beaver,

I write today regarding your invitation to appear before the NJEA Screening Committee yesterday afternoon. It is disappointing that you have decided to adhere to the incredibly short (and wholly artificial) timeline for completion of your policy questionnaire and appearance before your endorsement screening committee proposed for yesterday afternoon.

Given that your first communication with me was via email on Friday, July 10 @ 2:35pm, and included an expectation that your questionnaire would be completed on July 14 and the screening would be held yesterday demonstrates to me a complete lack of seriousness.

I may be a political outsider who is new to this process, but it's not lost on me that your intention was to endorse Senator Booker whether you met with me or not. As a son of an educator and an adjunct professor myself, I am not interested in being made a prop by New Jersey's most notorious special interest group. Moreover, as the first Indian American to ever win a primary nomination for a statewide office in New Jersey, your lack of respect and consideration won't go unnoticed by an increasingly important community in our state.

Since you don't have an interest in hearing from me in person, let me tell you what I believe:

1. Access to a quality education is among the powerful tools available to children and parents across the socio-economic spectrum. It is, without question, critical to one's ability to assimilate as Americans and achieve the American Dream. Especially for first-generation Americans like my wife and me. We were blessed to have parents who made education such a priority in our home. Without it, neither me nor my wife, would have been able to achieve so much so quickly.

2. I wholeheartedly support school choice via education vouchers and the expansion of charter schools. In other words, I vehemently oppose the NJEA's willingness to force mostly minority and poor children to have their educational opportunities – and with it, their economic potential – dictated by their zip code. The test scores and graduation rates in many of our former Abbott Districts in New Jersey are a disgrace. That the NJEA would lock students and parents into these failing schools is a failure to our children.
3. I believe in more local control of our school districts that empowers parents to have more of a say over the curriculum that they want their children to be taught. Too often, our schools have become places that indoctrinate our youth, as opposed to educating them. We should be encouraging open minds and free expression of differing ideas and viewpoints, not – as I've heard all too often from family, friends, and people across our state – treating students with a conservative viewpoint differently than their peers.
4. Lastly, the manner in which the NJEA financially exploits its dues-paying members to advance the left wing, ideological agenda of its leadership is abhorrent. The recent *Sunlight Policy Center of New Jersey* investigation into how the NJEA extracts more dues money from middle-class teachers in New Jersey than any other state in the country, while NJEA executives rake in an average annual compensation package of \$628,095 should make every single teacher think twice about allegiance to their union bosses.

I look forward to taking my campaign direct to your membership and engaging in thoughtful conversations with educators and school faculty across the state about how we can improve education, increase teacher pay, and free school staff from the grip of an organization who clearly cares more about advancing their own political influence than they do the interests of their members.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rik Mehta
Republican for U.S. Senate