



June 18, 2019

A STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE BENTON HARBOR AREA SCHOOLS COMMUNITY

To: The People of Benton Harbor Michigan and Benton Harbor Area Schools
1995 Union Avenue
Benton Harbor, MI 49022

Governor Gretchen Whitmer
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, MI 48909

We, the Kalamazoo Area Truth and Racial Healing and Transformation (TRHT) Leadership Team wish to join the rest of the country, the state, and particularly the people of Benton Harbor as they confront the State of Michigan's proposal to close Benton Harbor High School or dissolve the BHAS district.

As a local TRHT, we are guided by the need for social justice and redressing historical injustices based on race, ethnicity, and the pervasive myth of the hierarchy of human value. The closing of BHHS or the dissolution of the district as a whole does nothing but perpetuate these injustices, as have the State's previous trespasses on the city and the school district: attempts to exert control over a situation that they created and yet fail to understand, and leaving the city no better off for it. As one of the State of Michigan's most segregated communities as a result of housing segregation, redlining and historic disinvestment, the predominantly African American city of Benton Harbor is in a particularly vulnerable position. This recent threat to close Benton Harbor High School or dissolve the district entirely presents grave danger of irreversible devastation to the community and its children for generations to come. **Benton Harbor deserves better**, and we call upon the Governor and the State institutions to DO better.

Benton Harbor's Peace4Life Student Ambassadors organization, with the support of the BHAS Board of Education, elected officials, businesses and community leaders have asked for a 90 day extension of the State's deadline to allow ample time to gather all the information and input necessary for the district to put together a new plan. We at TRHT fully support this demand and call upon the state to fulfill their responsibility to the people and accept. Anything less would indicate a gross denial of accountability and a shameful lack of concern on the part of our elected leaders.

The closing of Benton Harbor High School, or any school in the district, is not an outcome we are willing to accept.

In Solidarity,

Andrew Chaponda
TRHT Separation Design Lead

Tandy Moore
TRHT Separation Design Co-Lead, Education