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## **PUBLIC STATEMENT: High School Send/Receive Update**

Nearly three years ago, the Absecon Board of Education began the process of ending its sending-receiving relationship with the Pleasantville School District in order to send its high school students to Absegami High School, which is part of the Greater Egg Harbor Regional School District. Though Pleasantville initially opposed Absecon's petition, the Pleasantville Board of Education later voted to accept its Superintendent's recommendation to withdraw its opposition and allow Absecon's petition to proceed uncontested.

While Pleasantville no longer opposed Absecon's petition, the Commissioner of Education still must determine that there will be no substantial negative educational, financial or racial impact on any of the districts before Absecon can send its students to Absegami High School. The New Jersey Department of Education has a specific process that must be followed in these instances, which included an opportunity for public comment by the Absecon and Pleasantville communities.

We are happy to report that over 100 residents submitted comments supporting Absecon's petition. Each comment detailed the incredibly positive impact attending Absegami High School would have on our children. In many cases, it would change their lives by allowing them to attend a diverse, high-performing high school with the friends with whom they grew up. It would give our high school students a sense of belonging somewhere, a sense of being wanted, and a sense of community they currently lack. It further would remove the anxiety and pressure our students feel in elementary and middle school on where they will be attending high school. Comparatively, not one Pleasantville parent, student, teacher, administrator or Board member submitted his or her own public comment seeking to have the petition denied, which shows the Pleasantville community does not believe there would be any substantial negative educational impact on their children should Absecon's petition be granted.

Following the conclusion of the public comment period, Absecon submitted updated expert reports to the Commissioner of Education, each of which found there would be no substantial negative impact on any of the school districts if the petition were granted.

The public comment period closed approximately eight months ago. Pleasantville later sought to revisit its decision not to oppose our petition this past summer, but we objected and the petition simply awaits a decision by the Commissioner of Education. Recently, our attorneys sent a letter to the Commissioner providing an update on recent highly publicized events that have transpired in Pleasantville and requested that our petition be granted soon to avoid subjecting more of our students to Pleasantville's ongoing turmoil. A favorable ruling in the next few weeks would allow our 8th-grade students and their families time to plan for the change in schooling for the 2022-23 school year, and for the impacted school districts to adjust their budgets and operations accordingly. Unfortunately, there is no required timeframe within which the Commissioner must issue a decision. We will continue to update the public and pursue this process with the determination our children deserve.