Members of the Lee’s Summit R-7 Board of Education

I am writing you on behalf of the Lee’s Summit National Education Association to share our concerns as you consider a contract extension for Dr. Carpenter. An extension of the contract demonstrates support for the direction and actions of Dr. Carpenter. A no vote on the contract extension sends a clear message that the board wants to change the direction and focus of our district. Our members have expressed concerns about the current direction and focus of our district. We would urge a vote against contract extension. The following are some of the reasons we believe a change of direction is necessary.

• We believe the innovation track was rushed and pushed through on the voters which raised questions of transparency between the district and our citizens.
• During the boundary change process, Dr. Carpenter pushed to have the Pacific Education Group present diversity training in our district. The PEG is controversial and puts its focus on “white privilege” as a means to draw attention to diverse bias. The request by Dr. Carpenter was for $7,000. It is our understanding that the diversity training was not advertised out for bids. If diversity training is an important focus for the board, this needs to be explored through the professional development committee. Research options, determine costs and make a recommendation that has broad support.
• We believe disparity in student achievement and opportunity should be addressed with all our minority populations, and not just focused on our black population. Diversity and equity should address our students that come with a variety of unique needs, such as: Color, LGBTQ, Special Needs, Childhood Trauma, and Poverty. Our district is becoming more diverse each year, our black population is but one part of our diversity. We support equity and training on how to best to meet the diverse needs of our changing student population.
• We do not believe the creation of assistant superintendent for “Equity and Student Services” was warranted or necessary. We believe our central office was already top heavy, while there are needs for more staff in our classrooms. The money spent on that position would have paid for at least three additional teachers. We are struggling with students that cannot read at grade level and have waiting lists for reading and math labs. We are desperate for special education teachers and paras to help below level students in our classrooms. Not only that, special education teachers and specialists are being asked to do more during their plan time as administration expects them to take excessive paperwork home when they desire to be with their families. This is unacceptable.
• We believe that the last two superintendent searches were lackluster. As one of the top ten districts in the state of Missouri, it is difficult to believe that our nationwide search resulted in a former superintendent from Ray-Pec and a current superintendent from Hickman Mills. Both of which have brought controversy to our district.
• The last superintendent search was done behind the veil of secrecy. Teachers were not invited to meet the finalists for the position. Community members were not invited to meet or listen to the finalists. As a result, a superintendent was imposed upon the community and staff.

We now have two open seats on the board to be filled. This will result in a new board of education. This new board was NOT part of the selection of Dr. Carpenter. We urge the board to hold off on any vote to extend Dr. Carpenter’s contract. Dr. Carpenter will still have a contract, but it is vital that the new board have the opportunity to determine the direction and focus for our district. If the new board determines Dr. Carpenter is a good fit for our district, they can extend his contract. If the new board determines he is not the right fit for our needs, they can begin the process for a robust and
transparent superintendent search. A search team with open communication and involvement with the staff and community.

Holding off on a vote to extend Dr. Carpenter’s contract would send a clear message to the voters that you are listening to their wishes. You were elected by our citizens to look out for the best interests of our school district. We believe any vote on extension should be done after our new board is sworn in.

Dr. Carpenter was controversial during his tenure at Hickman Mills. That district is still dealing with controversy and litigation brought on during Dr. Carpenter’s watch. We do not wish this for our district. We are saddened and alarmed by the high quality and beloved administrators and administrative assistants leaving our district early and in large numbers to pursue other careers.

As teachers, custodial staff, nurses, bus drivers, para professionals, administrative assistants and other staff, we feel as though our voices are being ignored or stifled when we are the ones in the trenches on a daily basis. We implore you to stand up for the citizens and employees in our district and delay a vote on contract extension until the newly elected board is sworn in and the new board has the opportunity to determine the direction and focus for our district.

If the board must vote and is unable to delay the vote, we encourage and urge the board to oppose the extension of Dr. Carpenter’s contract at this time. The new board could certainly reverse this decision if they so choose.

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Your National Education Association Executive Team
Heather Crain, LSNEA Interim President
Stacy Barbee, LSNEA Treasurer
Rhonda Ireland, LSNEA Membership Chair