Good evening. I am speaking on behalf of my fellow DEA members at Fountain Valley High School.

President Dishno, Superintendent Harwick, distinguished members of the Board, and District Administration, I address you this evening to promote a conclusion to our current contract negotiations that rewards the ingenuity of our district’s teachers.

District concerns are also Baron concerns.

I'd like to talk tonight about innovation. Education is more than a profession for most of us; it is a calling that has led us to serve others. It is, I daresay, an adventure since no two days are alike and teachers and programs must continually adjust and adapt to changing times.

We all love what we do, and we love the community and students that we serve. This ever-changing, dynamic career is deeply rewarding. It is also profoundly challenging.

As teachers we continually strive to better serve our students, and particularly now at the dawn of the 21st century. On the verge of a paradigm shift with the prospect of one-to-one technology access, innovation is of paramount importance. This innovation is what drives all of us, and sometimes scares us. Few people love change, yet teachers embrace change regularly, from the way we organize our classrooms, to the concepts we teach, to the strategies we use, to the way we support our students in a complex, often frightening world.

All of this work requires boundless energy and persistence. The reward is, of course, student success. However, that should not be the only reward, and we should not accept diminishing levels of compensation or benefits when no declension is warranted. While we are deeply driven by student achievement, that does not keep food on our tables or roofs over our heads. Strong compensation attracts innovative professionals. According to research done by the non-profit Learning Policy Institute, underpaid teachers are less effective and 2-3 times more likely to leave the profession. When we lose teachers, we lose our investments in professional development, and innovation is thwarted. Our district can not expect to maintain a tradition of excellence without the caliber of professionals who make it possible.

I am hopeful tonight and I ask the Board to consider the value of the journey we are all on here in HBUHSD. I implore you to direct the District team to provide a salary offer that honors the work done by innovators, by strivers, by those who are never content to be just “good enough.”

Thank you.