

**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF SOUTH ORANGE AND MAPLEWOOD, NJ
PUBLIC BOARD MEETING
May 17, 2021**

FOR ACTION

RESOLUTION 4149

**SUBJECT: SOUTH ORANGE MAPLEWOOD BOARD OF EDUCATION
RESOLUTION TASK FORCE TO PROTECT STUDENTS FROM
SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE**

WHEREAS, The South Orange Maplewood School District is committed to equity, diversity and inclusivity, providing safe and welcoming spaces for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, language, disability status, gender expression or identity, and sexual orientation; and

WHEREAS, The South Orange Maplewood Board of Education is in support of and is committed to ensuring inclusive, welcoming, safe school environments free from harassment and discrimination, including from unlawful sexual harassment and/or misconduct and all forms of violence, harassment, bullying and intimidation and in furtherance of the district's commitment to provide a climate and culture that fosters a welcoming, safe and healthy environment for all students to promote respect, dignity and equality; and

WHEREAS, Research shows that even though vast underreporting occurs, over 40% of middle and high school students are victims of sexual violence or sexual harassment; and

WHEREAS, Research indicates that educational institutions are the most common location of peer sexual victimization, and that sexual violence or sexual harassment have devastating effects on students which negatively impact their emotional and physical well-being; and

WHEREAS, Research shows that students who experience sexual violence and sexual harassment are more likely to withdraw from interests and activities, experience avoidance of school, finding it hard to pay attention in school and impacting academic outcomes. Research has also demonstrated that targets of sexual bullying and harassment experience anxiety, distress, loss of self-esteem, and depression; and

WHEREAS, The South Orange Maplewood Board of Education affirms its commitment that students should be able to go to school or participate in any school based sport or activity on or off campus without fear of sexual harassment, sexual or gender based violence, and to providing an environment free from sex-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual and gender based violence, interpersonal violence and bullying, and also reaffirms its commitment to providing a hostile free educational environment; and

WHEREAS, The South Orange Maplewood Board of Education affirms its commitment that the Title IX Coordinator, staff, and students should be trained about healthy relationships, consent and what constitutes sexual assault, bystander intervention, where students can get counseling, medical help, and other services, and how to respond appropriately to reports of sexual assault; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education directs the Superintendent or designee to identify key stakeholders — particularly students, parent/guardians, employees (teachers, Title IX coordinator, para-professional educators, special educators, administrators, coaches, and support staff), student groups, survivors of sexual misconduct, providers of victim support services (e.g., school counselors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists as well as local rape crisis and interpersonal violence centers) and those others whose expertise and input should be included; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education directs the Superintendent or designee to convene a Task Force comprised of identified students, educators, key stakeholders, community organizations and health professionals and community members to identify resources, resource gaps, and barriers and to review and conduct an assessment of the District Code of Conduct, Board policies, District regulations, training protocols, implementation issues and procedures on sexual harassment and sexual and interpersonal violence, and teaching consent, evaluating overall health curriculum, identifying district protocols as well as preventative and support measures, and directs the Superintendent to present a report with the results of that assessment as well as recommendations to the Board no later than September, 2021.