

# School City of Hammond

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Scott E. Miller, Superintendent

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**February 20, 2024**

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## **SCHOOL CITY OF HAMMOND PROVIDES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING UPDATE**

Indiana law requires the Board and the Hammond Teachers Federation (HTF) to engage in formal negotiations beginning on September 15 and ending on November 15 each year. The Board and the HTF conducted several negotiations sessions during the formal bargaining window but were unable to reach an agreement. On November 7, 2023, the Board asked voters to extend the referendum that was first approved in 2017. Unfortunately, that referendum was not approved.

On November 15, 2023, the formal bargaining window closed and IEERB declared the Board and the HTF to be at impasse. On November 17, 2023, and following a comprehensive review of the district's finances, Indiana Distressed Unit Appeals Board ("DUAB") ordered the district to develop a corrective action plan to address the district's financial challenges. The collective bargaining agreement is a significant cost center for the district. DUAB's November 17, 2023 order required the Board to propose significant changes to the terms of collective bargaining agreement as part of a comprehensive corrective action plan impacting all employee groups to remedy the district's financial challenges.

On December 27, 2023, the HTF filed an unfair labor practice complaint against the Board alleging that the Board's proposed changes to the CBA in response to DUAB's order after November 15, 2023, constituted bad faith bargaining. The filing of the unfair labor practice placed negotiations, including mediation and fact-finding, on hold pending the resolution of the unfair labor practice complaint. On January 22, 2024, the Board filed an unfair labor practice complaint against the HTF alleging that certain communications between the HTF and board members constituted a bypass of the Board's designated bargaining team.

On February 7, 2024, IEERB appointed Dr. James Dworkin to mediate the pending unfair labor practice and Dr. Michele Moore to serve as financial consultant to assist Dr. Dworkin and the parties. On February 15, 2024, Dr. Moore met with the Board's bargaining team to discuss potential solutions to both the pending unfair labor practice complaints and the CBA impasse. It is the Board's understanding that Dr. Moore also met separately with HTF's bargaining team.

The Board's goal throughout this process has been to negotiate a mutually agreeable collective bargaining agreement consistent with the corrective actions ordered by DUAB. The Board values its teachers and their contributions to the district. The Board continues to hope that it can work collaboratively with the HTF to resolve the impasse and unfair labor practices in a manner that is responsive to the concerns of the parties and DUAB. The Board respectfully requests that all future questions be directed to its chief negotiator, Susan Traynor Chastain, an attorney with Lewis Kappes.

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