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September 17, 2025

Dear Garfield Heights City Schools Community,

I am pleased to share encouraging news about the progress our district is making. The Ohio Department of Education has released the newest State Report Card results, and Garfield Heights City Schools has improved from an **Overall 2-Star Rating to 3 Stars**—meaning we have **met state standards**.

This improvement is the direct result of our collective commitment to student growth, particularly in the areas of **Progress (4 Stars)** and **Graduation Rate (3 Stars)**. By focusing intentionally on data, instructional practices, and a student-centered academic approach, our teachers, administrators, and staff have worked tirelessly to create better outcomes for our children. Their dedication has made this growth possible and we are determined to keep moving forward.

At the same time, I must also be transparent about the financial challenges that continue to place these gains at risk. As many of you know, our district has faced long-standing school funding difficulties. When the May levy did not pass, we were forced to make difficult decisions to balance our budget while striving to protect our classrooms.

**Steps Already Taken**

Our Board approved a voluntary buyout plan for the 2024–2025 school year. This gave several teachers the opportunity to retire or transition on their own terms, reducing the number of involuntary layoffs. Thanks to this effort, more teaching positions were preserved than originally anticipated. Still, a Reduction in Force (RIF) was required, impacting several administrator positions.

Over the past two years, Garfield Heights City Schools has made **nearly \$8 million in budget reductions** to right-size our workforce, control costs, and address enrollment trends. In the last three years, the district has reduced teaching positions by 20%—the equivalent of closing an entire elementary school—without closing a single building. Additionally, we have reduced our administrative staff by 30%.

We have also aggressively pursued outside funding to limit the burden on local taxpayers, including:

- **Stadium replacement completed without using general fund dollars**
- **Middle School window replacements supported through grant funding**
- **Elementary playground and outdoor classroom created through additional grants**

Despite these efforts, more reductions have been necessary. To date, we have eliminated or reduced:

- 6 administrative positions (building-level and central office)
- 2 exempt central office positions
- 35 teacher positions (11 through buyouts)
- Security associate positions
- Building substitutes
- Student school supply funding
- Arts programming funds
- Social-emotional learning curriculum (Satchel Pulse)
- And we have introduced pay-to-participate for sports and other activities

### **Looking Ahead**

Unfortunately, our financial reality requires even deeper cuts. To address a **\$9.5 million shortfall** projected for the 2026–2027 school year, the district is proposing:

- Reduction in force of 20 teaching positions
- Reduction in force of 10 operations positions (maintenance, custodial, transportation, and cleaners)
- **Closure of the Middle School and Elmwood Elementary school buildings**

- Possible cuts to the school day

These decisions are not made lightly. They represent difficult but necessary steps to ensure the long-term financial stability of Garfield Heights City Schools.

### **Our Commitment**

Even in the face of these challenges, our mission remains the same: *Every Child, Every Day, Together*. We will continue to pursue every available grant opportunity, strengthen community partnerships, and ensure that each school actively shares factual information with families. We are committed to transparency, responsible financial stewardship, and protecting the core instructional experiences of our students.

I am deeply grateful to our teachers, staff, families, and community for their continued commitment to our children. Together, we have proven that progress is possible. With your partnership and support, I believe we can overcome these challenges and build an even brighter future for Garfield Heights City Schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Reynolds", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Richard D. Reynolds  
Superintendent