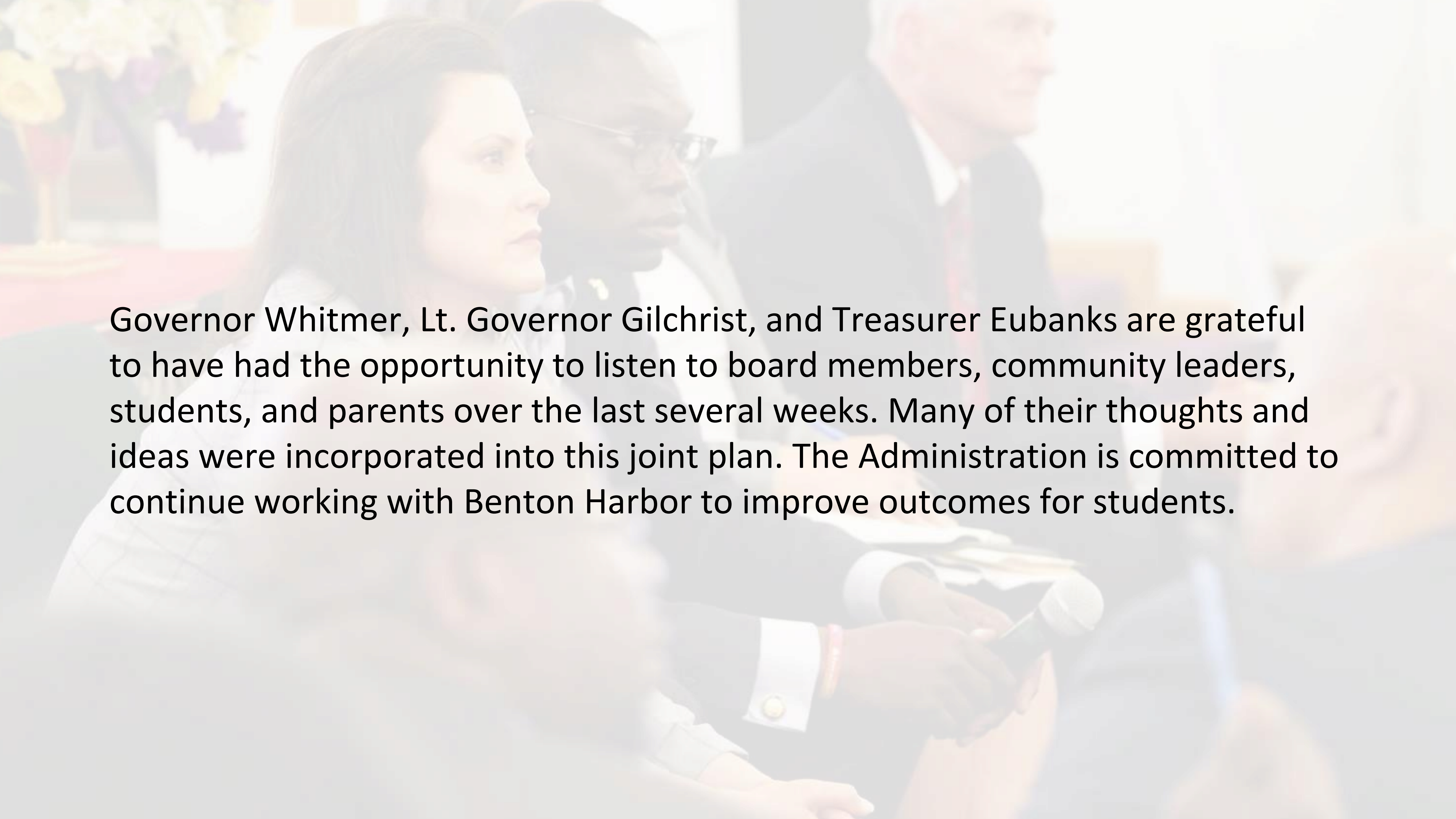


Better Schools, Brighter Future:

A Plan for Benton Harbor Area Schools



Governor Whitmer, Lt. Governor Gilchrist, and Treasurer Eubanks are grateful to have had the opportunity to listen to board members, community leaders, students, and parents over the last several weeks. Many of their thoughts and ideas were incorporated into this joint plan. The Administration is committed to continue working with Benton Harbor to improve outcomes for students.

Background

- Beginning July 1, 2019 the locally-elected Benton Harbor Area Schools regains the full authority of a traditional school board.
- Because the district has incurred a general fund deficit that is projected to last five years or more, they are still required to develop an Enhanced Deficit Elimination Plan (EDEP) and do monthly financial reporting.

Plan Overview

- As a part of its EDEP, the State Treasurer will enter into a financial recovery agreement with BHAS.
- This agreement will document the goals, milestones, and benchmarks that BHAS will agree to achieve – both academic and financial – within the next year.
- It will also document the supports that the State of Michigan is committed to provide.

Community Input

- The local board has been hard at work on its comprehensive strategic plan.
- For the 2019-2020 school year, the Board will have an opportunity to implement its plan, which has included significant community feedback.

Next Steps

- The local board, current BHAS teachers and staff, members of the community, and philanthropic leaders are planning to come together in mid-July for a “Day of Learning” to hear from national experts from nonprofit organizations who have a proven track record of turning around struggling districts.
- If the local district decides to engage with one or more of these organizations, we will work together to find support to engage those experts.

Next Steps

- If BHAS meets all the benchmarks that were outlined in the agreement during the 2019-2020 school year, the district will remain intact, and continue to make meaningful progress on improving student outcomes and achieving financial stability.
- All parties will come back together and set a new set of goals and continue to comply with its EDEP.

Examples of Benchmarks

The final version of the financial recovery agreement, including specific quantitative targets, is under review by the local board, but below are examples of benchmarks that the district will be held accountable for achieving:

- Hire a highly-qualified superintendent and CFO and retain them for the entire school year
- Increase the number of certified teachers hired by BHAS and decrease the use of long-term substitutes
- Increase teacher compensation
- Make attainable increases in student growth and proficiency, as measured by assessments like M-STEP and SAT
- Significantly decrease the percentage of students that are chronically absent
- Ensure that members of the local board participate in leadership training sessions
- Adopt a balanced budget
- Reduce the percentage of the budget used for non-instructional expenditures

If Benchmarks Are Not Met

If BHAS does not meet the Year 1 benchmarks outlined in the agreement, the Board agrees to suspend operations of the high school. The district would partner with surrounding districts to serve students in grades 9-12. The Board would revise its strategic plan to solely focus on improving outcomes for students in K-8 and stabilize the finances of the district.

Finalizing the Agreement

- After a productive meeting on June 26th, the board members that were in attendance indicated that they were interested in pursuing this framework.
- The joint plan requires the district to meet attainable benchmarks and goals to show improvement in academic outcomes among Benton Harbor children while stabilizing the finances of the district.
- We remain committed to working with board members, teachers, students, parents, community leaders, and partners to implement this plan.
- We expect to have a final agreement signed by the end of July.