



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 3, 2019

Stephanie MacNeel | Vice President, HSEF

813-231-2030 | Stephanie.Macneel@floridaea.org

Public School Employees Afraid for Their Jobs Set to Protest at Hillsborough County School Board Meeting With Support From Across the State

TAMPA, FL (May 3, 2019) – Two months after Hillsborough County School District leaders informed staff and the public they would seek proposals from private contractors to take over custodial operations, concerned employees are set to gather again outside the School Board building Tuesday May 7, 2019, 9-11am to demonstrate their fears and objections over the district's decision to continue the Request For Proposals (RFP).

- Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) currently employs approximately 1,650 custodial workers out of 1,753 budgeted-for positions.
- The Average salary for custodians is \$24,000 and HCPS is claiming \$2 Million savings on vacant positions.
- The Hillsborough School Employees Federation (HSEF) is the union representing 4,520 blue collar school district employees. Approximately 1,305 are custodians.
- Of these custodial employees 90% are minorities, 62% are women.
- ***The demonstration will be outside the ROSSAC building at 901 E Kennedy Blvd on Tuesday May 7, 2019, 9-11am. Rally will continue in the afternoon during the regular School Board meeting 3:30-6:30pm.***

The current disagreement is over how to best run custodial operations. HSEF leaders and employees are demanding district leaders follow through on a plan to implement a centralization model for custodial operations and abandon the RFP that remains open to outside vendors. HSEF President Iran Alicea, a school security officer, explains that their demand is backed by a clearly laid out recommendation that was provided by the Gibson Consulting Group to Superintendent Jeff Eakins and School Board members in 2016 (the Gibson efficiency study cost \$818,000 and took place during the 2014-15 school year). He says *"Gibson actually laid out a good plan that will save on costs and can achieve consistent and quality cleaning across the district, while keeping background checks and employee monitoring in house."* In June of 2017 school district leaders reported to the School Board and public that a committee had been formed and a centralization pilot was implemented to find cost savings.

After two years of inactivity of the centralization pilot, on March 8, 2019 HCPS leaders incorrectly communicated to custodial employees and the public that they had cut positions since the Gibson Study and would open up the bidding to outside vendors based on recommendations from that study.

"We know Gibson didn't recommend privatization and that the district's own numbers show custodial operations employee totals have remained virtually the same for the past seven years." HSEF Vice President Stephanie MacNeel tells how the district has not paired down the custodial staff and points out that since the 2012-13 school year the district has consistently averaged 1307 regular custodians and 235 head custodians, proving no adjustments have happened as a result of the Gibson Study or the pilot HCPS leaders said was started.

After employees protested last School Board meeting, Deputy Superintendent Chris Farkas sent a letter April 18, 2019 to workers correcting the misrepresentation of privatization in the Gibson Study and echoed exactly what was said in the June 2017 report, saying a committee would be formed to pilot centralization. However, union leaders point out that since March 8, the deadline for bidders to submit their proposals has been extended twice and now is set for May 14, 2019. **A time line of events with links to supporting documents can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/CustodialTimeline>.**

President Fed Ingram of the Florida Education Association based in Tallahassee, FL will travel to Tampa Tuesday to rally with employees in the afternoon. Former Florida House Representative Sean Shaw will also be attending.