**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**: Angelica Alvarez • Fa’izah Bradford Tyrone Curry Sr. • Bernie Dorsey • Joe Van **SUPERINTENDENT**: Susan Enfield, Ed.D.

Dear Students,

15675 Ambaum Boulevard Southwest Burien, Washington 98166 **highlineschools.org**

**206.631.3070**

Following the most recent school shooting in Florida, I know that school safety is on your minds and in your conversations. All of us who work in our schools and in support of our schools share your concerns and are deeply motivated to take action to ensure every school is safe.

While statistics tell us that schools are one of the safest places you can be, it is beyond unacceptable that school shootings continue to happen in this country. I am encouraged to see young people across our nation taking action to put an end to school violence.

Some of you may be considering joining students in other districts and states in a 17-minute walkout on March 14 or in other actions to send a message to adults in power. If you are, I applaud you for taking action on an issue important to you. This is an opportunity for you to learn what it means to be involved in the civic and political life of your community and your world. An important part of that learning is understanding the laws and policies that apply to you if you should choose to participate in a walkout during the school day.

You have a constitutional right to free speech in school as well as outside of school. If there is a walkout planned at your school, you are free to participate or not to participate. If you choose to participate, you need to know that school district policy requires you to be in class or be counted absent. District policy is “the law” in our schools, and as educators we are obligated to follow it. If you are absent from a class period, you will receive an unexcused absence unless your parent or guardian contacts the school office to excuse it.

I also want you to understand that teachers and other school staff are obligated by district policy to remain neutral on issues while at work. Our role as educators is to create safe, respectful learning environments where all students can express their views freely but appropriately. Our role is not to impose our own political views on students. We have suggested to your teachers some ways they can engage with you on this issue so that everyone can participate and we can work toward solutions together.

I believe that the only way to effectively address school shootings and their root causes is to do it together--educators, families, and students, shoulder to shoulder. As our future leaders, you have the power to create change, and we are here to support you.

Thank you for your cooperation as we work through this difficult issue together. You are welcome to contact me at susan.enfield@highlineschools.org with your questions, concerns and ideas.

Sincerely,



Susan Enfield, Ed.D.

Superintendent