**Good morning. Thank you Superintendent Anderson, Mayor Mitchell, and Principal Coelho for having me here today. My name is Tom Nickerson and I am the president of the New Bedford Educators Association. On behalf of the Association, I would like to welcome returning members as well as our new members and those who will be members soon.**

**As we enter the 2022-23 school year, know that your union's leadership will continue to tirelessly advocate for each and every one of our nearly 1300 members. Your Union never rests!**

**Exemplifying this, last year, we negotiated the strongest financial package for a Unit A contract in over a decade, began the work on our Unit B contract, which is nearing completion and I expect it to be just as strong. We also fought off a well- organized charter school expansion, and were successful in reviving some events not seen since before the pandemic such as the annual union representative training and the NBEA retirement party.**

**Over the summer, we worked with the MTA to do outreach to new hires and spread the word about the Fair Share Amendment. That work culminated with a new member event organized by our members at Cisco Brewers and the successful joining of dozens of new members last Friday at Keith Middle School alone as they completed their orientation and professional development, days that are now paid, thanks to language we negotiated in our new Unit A contract.**

**Looking ahead, this year we are planning several events, including member trainings such as PTS, loan forgiveness (an especially hot topic as of late), and retirement to name a few. We are also in the planning stages for fundraisers for the NBEA Scholarship fund and the annual clothing drive, so please keep your eyes on your personal emails for details. We hope you can support these worthy causes that help us help our community.**

**As a reminder, if you have any contract-related questions or concerns, or if you are interested in our exclusive dental plan, please ask your building representatives, members of the executive board, or contact the union office via phone at 508 994-4441 or email us at nbeducators@yahoo.com. To our newest members, and to those about to join, if you have questions about membership, please reach out. We will gladly help clarify any questions you may have and provide you with applications.**

**In closing, I plan to visit all the district's schools as soon as possible, to meet as many members as I can. Those visits have already begun with a trip to Hayden McFadden last week and New Bedford High School today. Until then, I wish you all a safe and happy school year. Please remember, a union is not any one person. It is not an executive board. It is not building representatives, although all of those individuals are essential to the work we do. A union is all of us. All 1300 of us. And in that union, there is great strength.**

**Thank you for your time.**