**Thank you Superintendent O’Leary, Mayor Mitchell, members of the School Committee and Principal Coelho for having me here today. It’s always a pleasure to visit NBHS, a place I called home for over 25 years. Good morning to all of my Union Sister and brothers and members of the administration. 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 our returning members as well as our many new members, and everyone in attendance.**

 **As we enter the 2023-24 school year, we would like to congratulate Superintendent O’Leary and Deputy Superintendent Aungst on their appointments. I look forward to working with the new leadership team in the year ahead. As they understand the culture of New Bedford’s Public Schools, are already knowledgeable of the contracts we have negotiated, and are both former union members themselves, I believe that our work will be fruitful. Congratulations to you both once again.**

**To our NBEA members, know that your union's leadership will continue to tirelessly advocate for each and every one of our nearly 1400 members. Your Union never rests!**

 **Exemplifying this, last year, we negotiated the strongest financial package for our Unit B contract in over a decade as well as several MOAs. We were successful in reviving some events not seen since before the pandemic, such as a social for members, a revised faculty representative training, and the NBEA end-of year and retirement party.**

 **Over this past summer, our newly created membership committee worked diligently to organize outreach to new hires. Last week alone, we were able to sign up over 90 new members at Parker, Gomes, Hay-Mac, and at the orientation at Keith Middle. As a reminder to new Unit A hires, the orientation and professional development days held at Keith Middle are now paid, thanks to language we negotiated in our most recent Unit A contract. That pay will be reflected in your first paychecks.**

 **I would like to take this opportunity to thank the individuals who helped in these membership efforts: The membership committee and NBEA volunteers who helped make our efforts such a success include many, such as board members Jen Lynch-Peters from Carney, Region II School, Irma Valerius from Gomes- a Region III school, now Roosevelt , and Victoria Jones from Hay-Mac- a region II school. Also, faculty representatives and other active members including Jacell Feliciano from Parker, Kelly Pacheco from Ashley, Ann Quaintance from Gomes, Christine Adams from NBHS, Colin Green from Keith Middle and many others.**

**I would be remiss if I did not mention that their efforts were led by First Vice-President Chris Garcia, newly elected Secretary Treasurer Justin Mare, and newly elected Unit A Vice President Lynn Drayton.**

**Their tireless work is a reminder to us all that a union’s strength does not stem from a single source. It is through the combined efforts of our members across the district that we are able to get the work done and make the changes we believe are important.**

 **Looking ahead, this year the NBEA is planning several events, including member trainings such as PTS, loan forgiveness, 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. Last year, our scholarship committee, led by Unit A Vice-President Lynn Drayton and long-time NBEA activist Jenn Thomas, our faculty representatives, and other NBEA volunteers who helped with sales, was able to raise over $5000 and helped us to offer 17 scholarships total. We hope to expand and eclipse last year’s efforts to help even more of the students in our community.**

**Additionally, through the work of our Unit A Nurses, and led by their Unit B supervisor Wanda Nunes, the NBEA was able to provide clothing and necessities for students in each of our schools through the clothing drive, which we will also look to expand. We hope you will consider supporting these worthy causes once again in any way you are able.**

 **As a reminder, if you have any contract-related questions or concerns, or if you are interested in our exclusive dental plan, (dental plans are exclusively offered by the unions of New Bedford) 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 to your faculty representatives, board members, or the office. We will gladly help clarify any questions you may have. As a reminder to all, faculty representatives and FAC members must be elected or selected as soon as possible. I have sent a reminder to building principals that this must be completed in the days ahead and that the names should be shared with building administrators and the NBEA as soon as possible.**

 **In closing, I plan to visit all the district's schools as soon as possible, to meet with all members. Until then, I wish you all a happy and safe school year. And remember, in union, there is strength.**

**My name is Tom Nickerson, NBEA President and I thank you all for your time.**