Dear Members of the New Bedford School Committee,

            My name is Lynn Drayton, I am the NBEA Unit A Vice President and Co-chair of the negotiating team. I’ve worked as educator for 28 years, and I am currently a first-grade teacher at Pacheco Elementary School. On behalf of the members of New Bedford Educators Association, I am speaking today to underscore the pressing need for our teachers and staff to achieve a sustainable work-life balance and to advocate for greater professional autonomy in our upcoming contract negotiations. These issues are not only critical for the well-being of our educators, but are also essential to the long-term success of our students and our schools.

            Teachers across our district are feeling the weight of increasingly demanding workloads. Demands include extensive planning and grading, meeting evolving curriculum standards, and supporting the social-emotional needs of our students. To many the responsibilities feel endless. Our educators are struggling to find a healthy work/ home balance because of their professional responsibilities. Many must either comein early, stay late or bring work home to fulfill their responsibilities.

            These demands have grown without adequate support or resources, along with increased class sizes and caseloads for Special educators and Providers. This had led to burnout that is driving too many of our skilled educators away from our schools. This isn’t just a personal struggle for individual teachers; it’s a challenge for the sustainability, stability and quality of our educational community.

 We are also advocating for greater professional autonomy because we know that when teachers can use their professional judgment in their classrooms, they are not only more engaged, but also more effective. Autonomy allows educators to draw on their expertise, make responsive decisions for their students, and use teaching methods that align with their strengths and their students’ unique needs. This fosters a positive and adaptive learning environment where both teachers and students can thrive.

            The NBEA will be seeking contract provisions that would address these concerns meaningfully, including more manageable workload expectations. By supporting teachers’ professional and personal well-being, we can create an environment where they feel more valued, energized, and committed to their work with the students of New Bedford.

            We look forward to working together on a contract that respects the dedication of our educators and strengthens the foundation of our district. Thank you for your time and consideration.