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Thank you for taking the time to review this statement on the character of Boy Basketball Head Coach Dana Mackenzie and the need to reinstate him within the district.

What has taken place this year to Coach Mackenzie is absolutely heartbreaking. Coach took over a program in 2003 that not many believed in, but he saw what it could be, believed in his vision and worked tirelessly to build and sustain a proud program over the last 20 years. In doing this in 2003 he had to come in and vastly change a culture of expectations and only participating in basketball to stay in shape for Football.

Coach taught me so much about the game of basketball. He showed me how I could use my passion in ways that don't show in a box score; but more importantly he guided me off the court and continues to be a great sounding board to this day. When my father walked out when I was 16 in August 2003 my mom called my coaches. Coach Mackenzie stepped in as father figure for me before the season even started. He held me accountable and made sure I was staying on the straight and narrow. With that came some uncomfortable times, he was hard on me, told me things that I didn't want to hear, but I needed to hear them. That is what coaches do; they challenge you to step up and be a better person and grow in moments when you are uncomfortable.

I also lost my job recently due to the pandemic. He was one of my first calls. He had nothing but support and worked tirelessly to help me network and find a new opportunity. Those are the things that he does outside of the season that no one sees or knows about, and I would argue those are more important than his 300+ Wins in his time at Waunakee.

I Would also be remiss if I didn't mention the great coaching staff Coach Mackenzie has assembled in of Coach Selk, Coach Knutson and Coach Knatz. Behind every great Head Coach is a great group of Assistants. All these coaches are capable of being head coaches at other schools but have chosen to stay together as a staff for 20 years. They stay together because of the great leadership of Coach Mackenzie and what he believes in, if they didn't, they wouldn't have stayed.

I strongly urge you to look at his 20 years in the district and the amazing impact he has had on the young men and women in the community. If you truly believe that the program needs a new direction you are clearly forgetting where the program was before his tenure. Removing him as the Head Coach will have negative impacts beyond the basketball court.

If you are making this this decision based on the claims of Mike Brandt and Mark Whalen I strongly recommend not caving to their baseless claims and litigation fears. They have spread misinformation that is completely false and has turned up nothing, yet they continue to dig into the situation.

If this really wasn't about playing time and nothing was found to be done improper why the need for a new direction? What you are doing is wrong and sets forward a playbook on how to remove a leader and mentor if someone simply doesn't align with their views. This is a dangerous slippery slope because it shows with enough misinformation and threatening action that someone can get their way in a situation. This will have ripple effect to the entire District, Dane County, and the State if this is allowed to stand.

Personally, as someone who was around for coach in the tough years (go back and look at the record books), we were awful, it was tough. If he was kept then when there were all the complaints, why lose faith after 20 years from a small group that think their way is correct? If I had a child, I would be ecstatic to have Coach Mackenzie teaching them and mentoring them on the court.

The thing most students don't realize until they have graduated high school is how much a coach or a teacher has influenced them and helped them grow into adulthood by the lessons they have taught. Undoubtedly in the time I have known Coach I can say he fits that mold. Coach Mackenzie should be seen as a great asset to the district given his years of experience in regard to academic and athletic success.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize I played 1 minute over two years of Varsity basketball, and these are my beliefs. Reach out to other Alumni that have play various minutes and I guarantee you many of the young men and women have stories like mine and think the world of coach. You must remember that not everyone is going to believe they had a great experiences. Even the best CEOs in our country don't have a 100% approval rating, please don't expect that for a head coach as its unsustainable. If you do Waunakee Activities and athletics will quickly become non-existent as there will be no one to guide the youth.

You still have time to reverse course and set things right. I hope you take this under advisement and move towards reinstatement.

Sincerely,

Mitch Farrey