



## Wall Township Public Schools

Office of the Board of Education  
1620 18th Avenue  
Wall, New Jersey 07719

Christine Steitz  
Board President

May 15, 2024

Mr. Kevin Walsh  
Acting State Comptroller  
New Jersey Office of the State Comptroller  
20 W State Street  
Trenton, NJ 08608

Dear Mr. Walsh:

I am writing to your office as a member of the Wall Township Board of Education. I represent the taxpayers of our district, with the honor of advancing the education of our students and the practice of our outstanding staff. It is my responsibility to be sure the district is well-run, which includes promoting fiscal responsibility and accountability as a required aspect of that obligation. My purpose for writing is two fold. First, I would like clarification regarding the stance of your office on the financial practices of the Wall Township Board of Education and Wall Township School District. Second, I would like to consider the responsibility of your office to all taxpayers in regard to individual citizens exhausting resources and tax dollars by making frivolous and/or repetitive OPRA requests.

Since I joined the Board in January of 2020, your office and your name have been regularly introduced in electronic communication and at the microphone at public meetings by a single member of the community who states the Board of Education requires your expertise in uncovering unethical practices and financial dealings in our district. This person has stated that she has presented evidence of wrong-doings and your office has encouraged her to keep the information coming. If this is accurate...there is cause for concern.

A very informal search of my Board email finds 204 emails linked to the "comptrollertips" email address and 324 emails linked to the "kevin.walsh" email address by this same individual suggesting claims of a multitude of unethical practices. If these emails presented sound evidence of any kind of fraudulent or improper activity, my expectation is the district would have been notified and investigated thoroughly. Rightly so. To my knowledge as a Board member, the Comptroller's office has found cause to solely inquire about a single issue, which revealed no wrong-doing. I would not like to assume, but rather to hear from your office, that this alleged evidence and these claims are unfounded. The people of Wall Township deserve clarification from your office-are the practices of either the Wall Township Board of Education or the Wall Township Public School District a cause for ongoing or routine concern by your office?

I am requesting that you certify that you find our district and Board of Education in good standing with your office. This will signal to the community that you have acted in the best interest of taxpayers, have done due diligence in investigating issues you believe have merit, and have found the district cooperative and in compliance with laws and regulations. This would go a long way in solidifying confidence in our district practice. Community confidence in the Board of Education is central to achieving a shared goal of providing educational excellence for all of our students.

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During my four year tenure on the Board, I have witnessed information misrepresented to serve personal narratives and am familiar with the organizational fatigue caused by processing the onslaught of accusations. Many people simply "tune it out" and humor conversations. The Board of Education does not have that luxury...and neither does your office. During your testimony regarding bill S2930 in March you reference the public stating..."they don't know who else to go to, but they know the Office of the State Comptroller receives their tips, answers the phone whenever they call. Residents see something that concerns them, and they come to us for an independent and objective look." The taxpayers of Wall deserve to know if the concerns submitted by this resident warranted review and the outcome of any investigation. As you further stated, "my job is to protect the interests of taxpayers and taxpayer funds. And I welcome that help. We need all the help we can get to help keep the government honest." At this time, the taxpayers of Wall need your help, we the members of the Board (who are also taxpayers) need your help by providing assurances that this district is functioning honestly based on your review.

The responsibility of protecting the interest of taxpayers and taxpayer funds should include discouraging the tremendous waste of funds and resources suffered when OPRA is weaponized and dispelling assertions of financial misconduct. The people of Wall continue to pay salaries to administrators and staff to participate in never-ending games of paper chasing that do absolutely nothing to benefit our students or staff in any way. Wasteful. We pay twice when you consider we are also funding the investigations your office initiates based on these accusations. Wasteful. The fact this citizen testified at the above mentioned hearing, coupled with your comments, may give the optic she has been given a blessing to continue with her "work". This ongoing diversion must end. The people of Wall deserve some assurance that you have either found the concerns presented repeatedly to your office legitimate OR you have found them baseless.

The Board would also be grateful to open a dialogue with your office regarding OPRA practice and supporting new legislation. I am hopeful the passage of the revised OPRA bill through the legislature will usher in a new day of a balanced approach to maintaining transparency of governmental agencies while holding parties bent on harassment responsible for their actions. It would be beneficial to consider the impact not only on our district, but the impact to other school districts, municipalities and agencies like the Comptroller's Office also contacted by this single person over the past decade, to truly understand how OPRA as it stands today, impacts an organization. When the spirit of the law is distorted, it has far reaching consequences for many. To start with, over 3000 students and 700 staff in my district deserve the full attention of the District Superintendent and the staff we pay to meet the needs of the district...it is outrageous how much focus is pulled away from advancing education, mental health initiatives, facility management, human resources and technology to continually entertain individual folly. The OPRA responses **THIS WEEK ALONE** provided 639 responsive pages and several are pending extensions due to requests for information that **span 13 years** of information. I would be grateful to partner with your office, members of the legislature, Department of Education, and any entity that advocates optimizing the use of taxpayer funds for the benefit of many deserving students and citizens of New Jersey.

All the best,  
Christine Steitz  
WTPS, Board President