

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **Joint Statement from SBSB and BSD Regarding Volleyball Incident**

**School Districts Condemn Discrimination, Praise Officiating of Game, Call on State to do more to Keep Kids Safe**

**Burlington, VT** On Wednesday night, an incident occurred during a Girl's volleyball game between South Burlington (SBHS) and Burlington High Schools (BHS) in which racial and transphobic slurs were directed toward Burlington players. The referee was alerted of the incident and stopped play of the match to speak with the coaches and players. After confirming with coaches, it was determined that significant harm was done and the decision was made to stop the match, with Burlington coaches helping their players leave the court.

SBHS has offered to forfeit the game to indicate support of the BHS team and to show their intolerance of this kind of behavior. The two Districts are working together to process the incident utilizing restorative practices to help both teams heal and move forward. On Thursday, members of the SB volleyball team traveled to BHS so that players on both sides could connect and participate in a restorative circle to begin repairing the harm done. Guidance supports were also made available to students and staff at both BSD and SBSB for those needing to process the events. In addition, SBHS Principal Patrick Burke, Assistant Principal John Craig, and SBSB Athletic Director Mike Jabour have launched an investigation into a possible violation of the SBSB Hazing, Harassment, and Bullying policy; BHS leaders are fully cooperating in this work.

Both school districts wish to thank the official for the way they handled this incident. Stopping play after being alerted to discriminatory behavior is unequivocally the right thing to do. By stopping play and connecting with the athletes and coaches on both sides, they showed great judgment in prioritizing the safety and well-being of the students, which must come first in any school-affiliated event.

Please see the following joint statement from SBSB Athletic Director Michael Jabour and BSD Athletic Director Quaron Pinckney.

“Discrimination in any form can no longer be allowed to happen and these incidents must not be swept under the rug. We condemn all acts of discrimination which are painful not only to the targeted student(s) but those who must experience second-hand victimization as they are forced to witness and left to digest these painful incidents. These incidents are not relegated to athletic venues or one or two cities in Vermont. One week, someone in your city may be a victim and the next week, someone in your city may be the accused. This incident further underscores that racism and LGBTQIA+ discrimination is a Statewide, systemic issue that must

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David Young, SBSB Superintendent  
Tom Flanagan, BSD Superintendent

be addressed at the highest level. We ask the Vermont Principals Association, Vermont Superintendents Association, and the Vermont Agency of Education to take these instances seriously and to do more to support students and schools. It is not the responsibility of the VPA's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee chairs alone to address these issues in the public or fight for change, we all must be a part of this crucial work to keep our kids safe."

SBSB and BSD Superintendents David Young and Tom Flanagan support the strong stance their athletic directors have taken, adding "As leaders in our community, Directors Jabour and Pinckney are doing amazing work to both address this situation together and help lead the state forward in the quest for true equity and inclusion. However, they cannot, and should not have to do this work alone and we echo their calls for more and better engagement and action at the state level. We strongly denounce any and all racist and transphobic speech and stand with our communities to ensure our students do not experience this kind of harm."

In addition to working together to repair harm and push for change at the state level, Directors Pinckney and Jabour will be collaborating on the creation of a statement that will be shared at the beginning of every SBSB and BSD game that clearly states that any and all instances of discrimination will not be tolerated before, during, or after athletic events or in our day to day lives.

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