March 21, 2022

Board of Trustees
Hinds County School District
13192 Highway 18 West
Raymond, MS 39154

Re:  *I Need A New Butt* incident

Dear Trustees:

The National Coalition Against Censorship is an alliance of national nonprofit groups dedicated to protecting freedom of expression, including the rights of K-12 students, teachers and staff. We are writing in response to news reports that Toby Price, an assistant principal at Gary Road Elementary School, was terminated because he read the book, *I Need A New Butt*, to students at the school. We believe that this action was inconsistent with the District’s professed dedication to freedom of inquiry.

District Policy IAB states that the District’s mission is “to develop the academic potential of all students by providing them with opportunities for intellectual stimulation, self-realization, and physical and intellectual growth.” The policy further states that the District will “ensure a broad range of experiences for students.”

If Mr. Price was indeed terminated because he read *I Need A New Butt* to students that action undermines the aforementioned district policies. Although the book presumably was not on the District’s approved reading list, it is difficult to believe that it posed a threat of harm to students. Imposing such a harsh penalty for reading a rather innocuous book sends the message to students that even a slight deviation from social norms is so egregiously wrong that it merits the most severe punishment that the district can mete out.

The Board’s action also creates a chilling effect among teachers, who will fear that they, too, will suffer consequences if they ever dare to bring new or different ideas or perspectives to their students outside of approved curricula. Such a climate is inimical to intellectual growth and self-actualization. It would prevent students from reaching their full potential.

Therefore, we call upon the Board to rescind its termination of Mr. Price, and to publicly reaffirm its commitment to student intellectual stimulation, self-realization and intellectual growth.
Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely yours,

Christopher Finan
Executive Director
National Coalition Against Censorship

Co-signed by: American Library Association Office of Intellectual Freedom
The Authors Guild
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
The Freedom to Read Foundation
National Council of Teachers of English
Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators