

**Side Letter of Agreement Concerning Mental Health Supports
to be incorporated into the appendices of the collective bargaining agreements.**

The Newton Public Schools (NPS) and the Newton Teachers Association (NTA) (collectively the “Parties”) share a commitment to address students’ social-emotional well-being. Our students’ social-emotional needs are greater than ever. The Parties agree that supporting students’ social-emotional, mental health, and behavioral (SE/MH/B) needs is critical to fostering their academic success and overall well-being. Therefore, the Parties agree as follows:

1. Developing strong and responsive systems of support requires professionals with specialized training and skills. Social workers, school counselors/guidance counselors, psychologists, and other SEL professionals serve as invaluable support systems for students that enhance the overall well-being of our classrooms and our school community. These professionals possess unique skill sets and training focused on addressing the social and emotional aspects of a student’s life. These professionals provide a variety of direct support for students, addressing a myriad of family issues, social-emotional, mental health and behavioral concerns, and other challenges. Their insights and expertise are also critical for building and sustaining effective tiered systems of support in our schools, particularly at the Tier 2 and Tier 3 levels. The Newton Public Schools 2022 District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) identifies the need to provide students with these supports to provide the necessary tiered instruction and intervention.
2. **NECP and Elementary School Social Worker Deployment.** The Superintendent of Schools has secured a commitment from the City of Newton for funds to hire five (5) additional social workers for the 2024-2025 school year. The Superintendent of Schools sent a letter to the school community dated January 28, 2024 that reads: *“5.7 social workers to be added to the elementary level—resulting in 50% of the district having a social worker added to schools for the upcoming school year (24-25) and guaranteed for the length of this 4-year contract.”* The Superintendent agrees that she will continue to prioritize funds to maintain **and/or** increase the social worker staffing levels set forth in her January 28, 2024 letter to the community with the goal of adding additional social workers, school counselors, guidance counselors, and/or psychologists, such that by the end of the 2026-2027 school year there shall be additional FTE in elementary schools and NECP in this category beyond the staffing in the 2023-24 2024-2025 school year.
3. **Middle School Mental Health Professional Deployment.** The Superintendent of Schools and School Committee will, as in NECP and elementary schools above, prioritize an increase to the total allocation of social workers, counselors, and/or psychologists in the middle schools ~~to at least one full-time general education social worker per school~~ no later than the start of the 2025-2026 school year such that by the end of the 2026-2027 school year there shall be additional FTEs in middle schools in this category beyond the staffing in the 2024-2025 school year. The Superintendent agrees to continue to prioritize funds for mental health professionals to meet the needs of students in middle schools.
4. **Committee on Mental Health Support for Students (“CMHSS”).** The Superintendent shall establish a Committee on social-emotional, mental and behavioral health support for students in grades preK-12 no later than December 1, 2024. The CMHSS will consist of three (3) members appointed by the Superintendent, and three (3) members appointed by the NTA. The parties may jointly agree to increase the number of members in equal proportion. The CMHSS will meet at least four (4) times each school year to review supports for student mental health and make recommendations to the School Committee for ways to improve the supports. The Parties do not waive any bargaining, enforcement, or management rights on account of the recommendations made by the Committee. At the end of the 2026-2027 school year, the CMHSS shall assess

progress to determine whether to disband or continue to meet.

5. **Community Forums.** During the 2025-2026 school year, the NTA and NPS will host at least two community forums for parents to provide an overview of current programming and to solicit input on the mental health supports the district may provide in the future. The first community forum shall take place no later than January 15, and the second community forum shall take place no later than May on dates agreed to by the NPS and NTA. The Parties will jointly plan, run, and publicize the meetings. The purpose of the meeting shall be to gather public input in order to make recommendations for improvements to the supports and programming.

Anna Nolin, Superintendent of Schools

Mike Zilles, NTA President

Date: _____

Date: _____

Chris Brezski, School Committee Chair

Date: _____