January 20, 2022

Dear The New Bedford Light,

Education is one of the greatest investments a society can make in its communities. As President and CEO of BayCoast Bank, I am proud of our long track record of providing significant financial and logistical support to a wide range of educational initiatives throughout our communities, demonstrating our commitment to the people we serve.

For us, supporting educational initiatives is nothing new – we have supported local public, parochial, vocational, private, and charter schools, in addition to non-profits, and local colleges and universities including Bristol Community College and University of Massachusetts Dartmouth for years. While educational support has always been a priority for BayCoast Bank, in 2017, we made the decision to make a major investment toward this priority, and focused the majority of our marketing budget – almost $500,000 – on the general promotion of education throughout the region. Additionally, over the next four years that followed, we provided over $2 million to support a variety of scholarships, programs, and initiatives that aim to expand educational achievement specifically across the South Coast.

These investments have been made in collaboration with key stakeholders. Many of our staff members serve on school boards and committees for numerous districts and schools, lending their expertise and working with local school leaders. Working through the One Southcoast Chamber, we have partnered with local school leaders and the Massachusetts Teachers Association to organize and find regional professional development trainings and summits to provide teachers with the tools to help their students learn and succeed. We recognize the important role educators play in our society, we are proud of our collaborations with these many organizations, and we appreciate the distinct perspectives we all come to understand by working together.

During this time of contention, we think it’s important to remember that we all still hold common ground. We all agree that expanding access to early college programs is vital toward advancing educational opportunities and positive outcomes for our young people – in fact, in the last few months we donated $25,000 to Bristol Community College to help them expand early college access at Durfee High School in Fall River, and we applaud and support New Bedford’s application with DESE to expand early college access for their high school students. We all want the best for our students.

We recognize, however, that our involvement with the plan for Innovators Charter School has become a distraction to that consensus. Therefore, I have stepped down as vice chair and board member for the proposed school, and we have withdrawn any BayCoast employees from sitting on the board of this proposed entity. Additionally, at this point we will refrain from any further discussion, advocacy, or involvement with the proposed school.
Our core business is to serve the banking needs of our community, which we have been doing since we were first chartered in 1851. We remain unwavering in our commitment toward helping our communities. Providing more opportunities through our broad-based support of educational initiatives is something we intend to continue, because it’s the right thing to do.

Sincerely,

 Nicholas M. Christ
 President & CEO