

To: Denver Public Schools, Board of Education

From: David D. Powell, Jr. and Sara R. Bodner

Re: Privileged and Confidential Investigation Report for Complaint Alleging Discrimination by Board Member John Youngquist

Date: October 27, 2025

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 22, 2025, Superintendent Dr. Alex Marrero sent Denver Board of Education President Dr. Carrie Olson a letter alleging “grave and ongoing concerns about Board Member John Youngquist’s behavior.” The letter contained seven categorical allegations and called for the Board to take action.

The law firm of Garnett Powell Maximon Barlow & Farbes (GPMBF) was retained on June 26, 2025, to conduct an independent investigation into Dr. Marrero’s first two categorical allegations against Mr. Youngquist—1) hostile and demeaning behavior toward staff, particularly staff of color, and 2) behavior reflecting racist and oppressive undertones. GPMBF investigated the allegations at the same time due to the overlapping nature.

GPMBF conducted a multi-month investigation that included numerous witness interviews, including Dr. Marrero and Mr. Youngquist, and the review of relevant documents, recorded board meetings, and podcast interviews.

GPMBF used a preponderance of the evidence standard, meaning more likely than not, and concluded:

1. It is more likely than not that Mr. Youngquist engaged in belittling, dismissive, and condescending behavior towards some District staff members.
2. It is more likely than not that Mr. Youngquist’s behavior towards some District staff members has not changed despite it being noted in public and private settings by staff and board members.
3. It is more likely than not that Mr. Youngquist exhibited bias in interactions with some District leaders of color.
4. It is inconclusive whether Mr. Youngquist deliberately acted in a biased manner in interactions with some District leaders of color.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Dr. Alex Marrero has served as the Superintendent of the Denver Public Schools district (the “District”) since spring of 2021. He identifies as an Afro-Latino male. He has a leadership team that reports directly to him. This leadership team is primarily comprised of individuals of color.

The Board of Education (the “Board”) is the governing body of the District. There are seven members on the Board. Five of the seven are elected by voters to represent specific regions, and two are elected at large to represent the entire city. Board terms are four years. In November 2023, three new board members were elected: Kimberlee Sia to represent District 1, Marlene De La Rosa to represent District 5, and John Youngquist at large. These board members assumed their Board positions on December 1, 2023.

Mr. Youngquist has a long career in education, including with the District. He has held numerous positions, including elementary and high school principal, director of principal talent management, and assistant superintendent.

On April 22, 2025, Dr. Marrero forwarded Board President Olson a message from a District staff member regarding an interaction with Mr. Youngquist. Dr. Marrero stated that, “[i]n light of this latest account, and the broader accumulation of harmful conduct, I am formally forwarding the attached letter that outlines the extent and severity of my concerns regarding Director Youngquist.” The April 22, 2025 letter, attached as **Exhibit 1**, contains seven numbered paragraphs with allegations about Mr. Youngquist. Board President Olson responded and stated that she had contacted outside counsel regarding the matter.

Caplan & Earnest, as outside counsel for the District, thereafter contacted GPMBF. The firm was formally retained by the District on June 26, 2025 to conduct an independent, impartial investigation into Dr. Marrero’s first two allegations—1) hostile and demeaning behavior toward staff, particularly staff of color, and 2) behavior reflecting racist and oppressive undertones. GPMBF did not investigate the other allegations raised in Dr. Marrero’s letter (numbered paragraphs 3 through 7) or Dr. Marrero’s call for Board action, therefore information about those allegations is not included in this report.

III. INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES

A. Overview

Because Director Youngquist is not an employee of the District, the District’s policies regarding procedures for investigating complaints of discrimination or harassment are inapplicable. GPMBF, therefore, determined its own procedures for conducting a fair and thorough investigation into Dr. Marrero’s allegations. GPMBF worked with outside counsel for the District to provide notice to witnesses that GPMBF would be contacting them to schedule interviews, to discuss any complications with scheduling such interviews, and about the format

of the report.

Ultimately, GPMBF interviewed the witnesses and reviewed the documents we believed were necessary to ensure a reliable investigation. We kept an open mind to ensure we were able to fairly and impartially evaluate the comprehensive evidence compiled and make determinations.

B. Scope

GPMBF was retained specifically to investigate Dr. Marrero’s first two categorical allegations against Mr. Youngquist—1) hostile and demeaning behavior toward staff, particularly staff of color, and 2) behavior reflecting racist and oppressive undertones. GPMBF did not investigate any other allegations in Dr. Marrero’s letter, therefore information about those allegations is not included in this report.¹

Because there is significant overlap between the two categorical allegations within the scope of GPMBF’s retention, we were able to investigate both simultaneously. For purposes of drafting the report, we distinguished the two categories to avoid repetition. We viewed the first categorical allegation as focused on Mr. Youngquist’s treatment of District staff, and the second categorical allegation as focused on potential bias in interactions with District leadership, including staff and Dr. Marrero. We distilled Dr. Marrero’s allegations into the following questions that we investigated:

1. Did Mr. Youngquist engage in belittling, dismissive, and condescending behavior towards District staff members?
2. Did Mr. Youngquist’s behavior towards District staff change after being noted in public and private settings?
3. Did Mr. Youngquist exhibit bias in interactions with District leadership?
4. Did Mr. Youngquist deliberately act in a biased manner in interactions with District leadership?

The first two questions map onto Dr. Marrero’s first categorical allegation and associated subpoints and the second two allegations map onto Dr. Marrero’s second categorical allegation and associated subpoints.

During our investigation, we were careful to take into consideration statements made by witnesses, including Mr. Youngquist and Dr. Marrero himself, that Mr. Youngquist may have other motivations for his treatment of Dr. Marrero that do not apply to his treatment of other staff members. We did not, however, specifically investigate these other identified motivations. We determined such an investigation would relate predominantly to numbered paragraph 7 in Dr. Marrero’s letter, which was outside the scope of GPMBF’s retention.

¹ Dr. Marrero sent a letter to Board President Olson on August 29, 2025. We did not investigate the statements made in this letter, other than to confirm with Dr. Marrero that he was not referring to any new conduct relevant to the scope of GPMBF’s investigation that he had not raised during his interview.

GPMBF also did not investigate Mr. Youngquist's interactions with staff and/or students when he was a District employee or when he worked in the Aurora Public Schools district. Some witnesses, however, discussed their previous interactions with Mr. Youngquist before he was a board member. These interactions are addressed if we determined them to be relevant to witnesses' statements about their interactions with Mr. Youngquist since he joined the Board. Some witnesses raised information they had heard from others, such as students, staff members, or community members, about interactions with Mr. Youngquist. Mr. Youngquist identified numerous "character"² witnesses who he believed could attest to his character and devotion to equity-focused progress. During his interview, Mr. Youngquist referred to his 35-year career, including programs he had created, progress he had achieved, and staff he had hired and advanced. We did not follow up on statements by witnesses with secondhand information regarding interactions with Mr. Youngquist before he was on the Board or interview Mr. Youngquist's character witnesses or other individuals to confirm his statements about his career. We concluded evidence supporting or contrary to the allegations outside of the time Mr. Youngquist has served on the Board, except when a significant witness had a pre-existing relationship with Mr. Youngquist, was not within our scope and that if we broadened our investigation to include such information, we would have to do so fairly.

Finally, GPMBF did not investigate claims made by board members related to retaliation. Certain board members claimed Mr. Youngquist retaliated against them when they raised concerns about his behavior by alleging violations of Colorado's open meetings law and by accusing another board member of speaking in a threatening and condescending tone to him in violation of Board policies. Mr. Youngquist's counsel claimed in a letter dated October 21, 2025 that certain board members retaliated against Mr. Youngquist by raising concerns about his behavior due to his intention to testify truthfully in pending lawsuits. Mr. Youngquist did not raise this matter during his interview.

C. Witnesses Interviewed

GPMBF first determined who to interview based on information we learned from our interview of Dr. Marrero. Our interview list thereafter evolved based on information learned during subsequent interviews. We sought to interview individuals who either experienced or observed the conduct alleged by Dr. Marrero. We also determined it necessary to interview additional individuals identified as interacting with the Board to compare their experiences with the experience of the individuals identified by Dr. Marrero.

GPMBF conducted 28 interviews in total. Of the 28 interviews, one was of Dr. Marrero; one was of Mr. Youngquist; 18 were interviews of current District employees, including all of Dr. Marrero's leadership team; two were interviews of former District employees; and six were interviews of board members. We conducted follow-up interviews of three witnesses, including Dr. Marrero, to ask about certain comments made by Mr. Youngquist.

² Language in quotations is verbally quoted from interviews and/or document.

Our first interview was of Dr. Marrero on July 14, 2025. The interview took place at GPMBF's Denver office and lasted approximately two hours. He responded to every question asked and came prepared with documentation he wanted to share with us. We interviewed Mr. Youngquist two and a half months later, on September 30, 2025, at GPMBF's Denver office. He attended the interview with his lawyer. He was also prepared for the interview with documentation available electronically that his lawyer had shared the day before. The interview lasted approximately five hours. Mr. Youngquist responded to every question asked. His attorney spoke at various times to advocate on Mr. Youngquist's behalf. Just as Colorado jury instructions advise that arguments of counsel are not evidence, we did not consider Mr. Youngquist's attorney's advocacy to be factual information relevant to our determinations. Mr. Youngquist suggested we speak with "character" witnesses he had compiled and with individuals outside of Dr. Marrero's leadership team. We did not interview the "character" witnesses because our investigation was focused on his treatment of certain individuals during his tenure on the Board, and not his long career as an educator. Still, we explained to him that we had in fact interviewed individuals outside of Dr. Marrero's leadership team. David Powell and Sara Bodner attended the interviews of Dr. Marrero and Mr. Youngquist.

Most of the other interviews occurred at GPMBF's Denver office and were conducted by David Powell, Sara Bodner, or two other attorneys at GPMBF involved in the investigation. Three interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams. One interview was conducted via phone call. The interviews of the witnesses other than Dr. Marrero and Mr. Youngquist were generally 1-1.5 hours. Witnesses were asked general questions related to Dr. Marrero's allegations and specific questions based on information provided by Dr. Marrero and/or other witnesses.

One current District employee did not respond to GPMBF's repeated requests to schedule her interview. We are aware from Mr. Youngquist that this employee advised him she had been contacted for an interview. We have no reason to believe Mr. Youngquist told her not to participate.

One former District employee declined to be interviewed unless we guaranteed him total anonymity. In consultation with the District's outside counsel, GPMBF determined it could not provide such guarantee.

Dr. Marrero and Mr. Youngquist are identified by name throughout this report. Because certain witnesses, including board members, expressed concern about being publicly identified and/or potential retaliation, GPMBF decided to keep witness names and identifying information confidential to the extent possible.

D. Documents Reviewed

We asked witnesses interviewed if they had or knew of documents relevant to our investigation. Eight witnesses provided documents. Dr. Marrero provided a timeline and a substantial set of documents at his interview, however many of the documents related to allegations outside the scope of GPMBF's investigation. We used several of the documents related to the allegations

within our scope during interviews of other witnesses. Mr. Youngquist also provided a timeline and over a dozen documents the day before his interview. Some of the documents provided by Mr. Youngquist also did not relate to matters within the scope of GPMBF's investigation.

We reviewed press articles from 2025 that referenced concerns with Mr. Youngquist's behavior, a ChalkBeat article from 2022 regarding disagreements among board members, a CBS News article from 2023 regarding a survey by Mr. Youngquist, and two interviews by Mr. Youngquist – one on the Boardhawk podcast (episode No. 10) and one on the Justice Cast by FaithBridge podcast (season 2, episode No. 10).³

Finally, we reviewed recordings for 12 regular board meetings, 15 work sessions, and 4 special/progress monitoring meetings, and portions of 13 progress monitoring/public comment/special meetings. Several witnesses recommended we watch the publicly available footage but were unable to identify any specific board meetings. We prioritized the December 2023 through January 2025 time period, *i.e.*, after Mr. Youngquist joined the Board through when his behavior was discussed during a Board work session. We could not review footage from executive sessions because that footage is retained for only 90 days as required by law.

Overall, this was not a document-intensive investigation.

E. Credibility Determinations

GPMBF made determinations when necessary to assess the credibility of witness statements. Such statements could be credible in whole, in part, or not at all, based on the totality of the evidence. GPMBF considered Colorado Model Civil Jury Instructions 3:16 (Determining Credibility of Witnesses), which advises the fact-finder to take into consideration the witnesses' "means of knowledge, strength of memory and opportunities for observation; the reasonableness or unreasonableness of their testimony; the consistency or lack of consistency in their testimony; their motives; whether their testimony has been contradicted or supported by other evidence; their bias, prejudice or interest, if any; their manner or demeanor upon the witness stand; and all other facts and circumstances shown by the evidence which affect the credibility of the witnesses." GPMBF also considered the factors identified by the EEOC in *Enforcement Guidance: Vicarious Liability for Unlawful Harassment by Supervisors* (1999): inherent plausibility, demeanor, motive to falsify, corroboration, and past record.

GPMBF did not use a single factor as determinative of credibility but ultimately relied on a totality analysis focused on the following factors: (1) internal consistency, (2) corroboration with other witness statements and documentary evidence, (3) candor, and (4) motive.

³ The materials provided by Mr. Youngquist's counsel the day before his interview also included a link to Brother Jeff's podcast. We could not view the video at the link provided.

F. Standard

GPMBF utilized a preponderance of the evidence standard, which is the standard applied in civil litigation and predominantly applied in civil investigations. Preponderance of the evidence means it is more likely than not that the alleged conduct occurred.

We use the terminology of “inconclusive” to refer to conduct we determined could have occurred, but there was insufficient evidence that it more likely than not occurred.

IV. SUMMARY OF DETERMINATIONS

Our determinations below are based on GPMBF’s objective analysis of the evidence. The discussion does not describe all evidence we considered but instead summarizes the material evidence, including credibility determinations, that we determined supported and did not support the allegation. We have no stake in the outcome of this investigation, were not advised to reach certain conclusions, and do not have any role in next steps based on the investigation’s findings.

As a preliminary matter, we note that Mr. Youngquist has suggested that Dr. Marrero had motivations to make false accusations against him. While this could be possible, GPMBF conducted a thorough investigation and its determinations below are based on numerous witness interviews and documents, to the extent applicable.

A. Mr. Youngquist’s Behavior towards District Staff Members and Whether that Behavior Changed After Being Noted in Public and Private Settings⁴

(1) Evidence that supports the allegations

a. Some current and former District staff members described Mr. Youngquist’s behavior towards them as belittling, dismissive, or condescending.

We spoke with several current and former District staff members who believe Mr. Youngquist treated them in a belittling, dismissive, and condescending manner via email, during Board meetings, or during 2-on-2 meetings between staff and board members.

Two staff members, both of whom are people of color, shared that they have experienced this conduct repeatedly. Witness 1⁵ shared that on multiple occasions, on multiple issues, Mr. Youngquist questioned his advice. The interactions came to a head in March 2024 after via email

⁴ This section addresses GPMBF’s questions 1 and 2, as identified on page 3, because these questions involve substantially similar evidence. This section also corresponds with Dr. Marrero’s first categorical allegation relating to hostile and demeaning behavior.

⁵ Witnesses are referred to by number. The numbers do not have any significance and do not necessarily reflect the order of interviews.

Mr. Youngquist described Witness 1 as being deceptive in his communications, manipulative, and not providing Mr. Youngquist with the information he needed to receive as a board member. Dr. Marrero, board members, and another staff member were copied on the correspondence. Witness 1 responded to Mr. Youngquist's email, expressing that he found Mr. Youngquist's responses to be "disturbing, accusatory, and unprofessional," that Witness 1 "need[ed] to address a more personal and grave issue" and explained his discomfort with Mr. Youngquist's accusation—specifically how stereotypes of deceitfulness and manipulation have been applied to Black people. This email is attached as Exhibit 2. Mr. Youngquist subsequently asked Witness 1 to meet for coffee to discuss the email. Mr. Youngquist apologized and emphasized how he has historically lifted up Black women. Since this time and despite a subsequent effort to address his strained relationship with Mr. Youngquist, Witness 1 has avoided 1-on-1 meetings with Mr. Youngquist. Witness 1 has also observed that Mr. Youngquist avoids asking him for advice and otherwise engaging with him.

Witness 1 interacted with Mr. Youngquist when he was in a different position and Mr. Youngquist was a high school principal. Witness 1 recalled Mr. Youngquist questioned his competence and commented on one occasion that Witness 1 did not know what he was talking about.

Witness 2 recounted that Mr. Youngquist has ignored her or refused to engage with her on multiple occasions. On one occasion, during a 2-on-2 meeting with Mr. Youngquist and another board member, Witness 2 needed to end the meeting early because of another commitment. Mr. Youngquist raised his voice and demanded the meeting not be terminated. Witness 2 also dealt with Mr. Youngquist when she was a principal and he was director of principal talent management. Similar to the treatment she claims to experience now, Mr. Youngquist refused to engage with her at meetings with other principals.

Numerous witnesses described Mr. Youngquist as treating Witnesses 1 and 2 in condescending ways. Witness 3 described Mr. Youngquist as generally hostile to Witness 1 and said that he has observed Mr. Youngquist cut off Witness 2 in conversation. Witness 4 described Witnesses 1 and 2 as getting pushback on everything they do from Mr. Youngquist, and that he observed Mr. Youngquist question Witness 1 and tell him he was not telling the truth. Witness 5 described Mr. Youngquist as constantly challenging information presented by Witness 1 and using a condescending tone with Witness 2.

Notably, several witnesses identified the same series of interactions between Mr. Youngquist and Witness 1 on a specific issue relating to PERA compensation as demonstrative of Mr. Youngquist's condescending behavior. For example, Witness 6 described observing Mr. Youngquist display antagonism and dismissiveness towards Witness 1 as well as a general disregard for Witness 1's guidance and expertise. Witness 2 said she was privy to emails about this issue and that Mr. Youngquist gave the impression by his communications that he questioned Witness 1's competence.

Witness 7 stated that she observed Mr. Youngquist disparage and undermine Witness 1 in

emails, including about that same issue. Witness 7, who is a person of color but says she presents as white, contrasted Mr. Youngquist's treatment of her with that of Witness 2, for they have overlapping job duties related to the Board. She observed Witness 2 call Mr. Youngquist, and he did not answer or call back, but he would pick up right away if Witness 7 called him shortly afterwards. If Witness 2 asked for something via email or in person, Witness 7 observed Mr. Youngquist not respond or be rude about the request, whereas he would be fine with a request from Witness 7. Witness 2 would also share with Witness 7 how Mr. Youngquist responded (or did not respond) so that Witness 2 could follow up as needed. Overall, Witness 7 described Mr. Youngquist as not very nice to Witness 2, and nice to her, even though there is often no significant difference in what both are doing for the Board.

In addition to Witnesses 1 and 2, other witnesses described their interactions with Mr. Youngquist as involving belittling, dismissive, and condescending behavior. Witness 5, a person of color, recounted that after Mr. Youngquist was elected to the Board, he was being walked around and introduced by two board members to District staff. Witness 5 was in another staff member's office. Witness 5 extended his hand to Mr. Youngquist, but Mr. Youngquist refused to shake it. Since then, Witness 5 has experienced Mr. Youngquist avoid him in general hallway interactions and scrutinize and challenge the data and results Witness 5 and his team have presented in a condescending manner that makes Witness 5 feel like he is being talked down to. Witness 5 reported he believes Mr. Youngquist thinks he and his colleagues do not know how to do their jobs. Of note, Witness 5 has a pre-existing relationship with Mr. Youngquist because they were principals at the same time; Witness 5 described Mr. Youngquist as speaking down to him at times and not that collegial, and speculated it could have been due, at least in part, to the fact that Mr. Youngquist was principal of East High School (as opposed to a smaller high school). Witness 5 also described an interaction before Mr. Youngquist joined the Board where Mr. Youngquist met with him about safety issues and made a comment at the start of the meeting asking what Witness 5 was doing now and then identified a position that was lower than Witness 5's current position. Witness 5 perceived this as Mr. Youngquist purposefully demoting and thus demeaning him. Witness 2 commented that the interactions she observed between Mr. Youngquist and Witness 5 gave her the impression Mr. Youngquist does not have confidence in Witness 5's management abilities.

Witness 8, a person of color, reached out to all board members when she started her position on Dr. Marrero's leadership team to schedule informal introductory meetings and discuss her scope of work. Mr. Youngquist's assistant told Witness 8 that Mr. Youngquist would not meet with her. Every other board member did. Witness 7 confirmed Mr. Youngquist has often refused to meet with District staff, stating that when staff offered to schedule meetings with Mr. Youngquist to provide updates and information, he routinely declined to meet with them. Witness 2 also referred during her interview to District staff being upset about Mr. Youngquist not attending 2-on-2 meetings. Mr. Youngquist said during his interview that he chooses not to attend when he does not have a sense of the agenda or when it looks like the meeting will involve information he can review on his own and then provide a response or information.

Witness 4, a person of color, shared that during a board meeting, he once misspoke when

identifying an Executive Limitations policy number. Mr. Youngquist became angry and accused Witness 4 of not telling the truth. This surprised Witness 4, who perceived the error as minor. We showed Witness 4 an email that Dr. Marrero had identified as an example of Mr. Youngquist's inappropriate conduct towards Witness 4. This email was sent shortly after Mr. Youngquist joined the Board. In the email, Witness 4 sent a document that provided an overview of a process related to Reasonable Interpretations. In response, Mr. Youngquist asked Witness 4 to please provide the sources for the information described in the document. Witness 4 had forgotten about the email exchange but reported that at the time he received the email, he felt Mr. Youngquist's conduct was an instance of his word, as a Black man, not being trusted.

Witness 9, a white woman, recounted multiple meetings in 2024 where she presented on Reasonable Interpretations-related matters and she felt Mr. Youngquist was rude, interrupted her, asked numerous questions, and disagreed with her. Witness 10, a person of color and a member of Witness 9's team, was present for a 2-on-2 meeting with Witness 9 and Mr. Youngquist in March 2024. She observed that Mr. Youngquist was rude and dismissive of what she and Witness 9 had to say. During her interview, Witness 9 acknowledged that even if Mr. Youngquist was trying to hold District staff accountable to help the District achieve high expectations, there is an appropriate way to not be dismissive, to acknowledge efforts, and still hold people accountable. During another 2-on-2 meeting in October 2024, Witness 9 felt that Mr. Youngquist pushed back on almost every measure she presented and questioned her understanding of the data and why she and her team had identified specific goals. The other board member present asked only a few questions and did not express much concern, in contrast to Mr. Youngquist.

During a 2-on-2 meeting in December 2024, Mr. Youngquist questioned the validity and reliability of the data presented by Witness 9. During her interview, Witness 9 explained that she interpreted Mr. Youngquist to be questioning her ability, knowledge, and experience to be presenting on the data she was sharing (and in particular, whether she knew the difference between reliability and validity), in a manner that seemed to assume she did not have the requisite ability, knowledge, and experience to be doing so. We observed by watching footage that Mr. Youngquist questioned the validity and reliability of the data that was presented by Dr. Marrero and this witness during a board meeting a few weeks later. Witness 9 prepared a document in late 2024 or early 2025 recapping these incidents and other information. She wrote the document because she felt Dr. Marrero was being "set up" to fail with respect to Reasonable Interpretations measures. She shared a copy of the document with Witness 1 and told him to "use it if needed." She did not recall sharing it with Dr. Marrero but when she checked the link to the document during her interview, she saw that he had access to it and, in fact, this was one of the documents provided to us by Dr. Marrero. During her interview, Witness 9 pointed to another board member who is "critical" with a "high bar" and knows her job is to hold Dr. Marrero accountable, yet she asks reasonable questions and demands information in a way that is about the information and not the person delivering it.

Witness 3, a person of color, had an interaction with Mr. Youngquist during a 2-on-2 meeting in April 2025. The other board member who usually attended these meetings with Mr. Youngquist

did not attend that day, and Mr. Youngquist joined via phone. According to Witness 3, when he started to present, Mr. Youngquist jumped in with questions, repeated the same questions seemingly trying to get a certain answer or get Witness 3 in a “gotcha,” and said things like “you’re wrong.” It felt to Witness 3 like Mr. Youngquist was not recognizing Witness 3’s role, experience, and education. Witness 3 found Mr. Youngquist to be hostile, aggressive, and condescending. He said he has not had a similar encounter while working for the District. Witness 3 also commented that despite interacting often with elected officials who can be hostile and aggressive, this encounter with Mr. Youngquist was “astonishing.” Witness 3 sent an email summarizing this interaction after it happened to Dr. Marrero and Witness 2. This email is attached as Exhibit 3. Witness 3’s email noted he was providing the account because he “believe[s] strongly in maintaining a respectful and collaborative working environment, and [he] wanted to be transparent about how that interaction landed.”

Witness 7 was present for this meeting. She recalled asking Witness 3 to slow down in his speaking, and then shortly thereafter, Mr. Youngquist started to attack everything Witness 3 said in a dismissive and rude manner, including by repeating the same questions. She perceived Mr. Youngquist to essentially accuse Witness 3 of lying and not knowing what he was talking about. Mr. Youngquist admitted during his interview that he told Witness 3 that he did not believe the District was as far along as Witness 3 was representing it to be. Witness 19 was also present for this meeting and stated that Mr. Youngquist became aggressive, combative, and argumentative towards Witness 3 after Witness 3 said the District had a financial literacy policy. According to Witness 19, Mr. Youngquist insisted the District did not have such a policy, which Witness 19 found illogical and bewildering because there was no question such a policy was in place. Witness 19 said she was taken aback by Mr. Youngquist’s behavior because it was so extreme and aggressive. Following the meeting, Mr. Youngquist emailed Witness 3 thanking him “for taking a minute this morning” and asked for the District staff position on another bill and the reason for that position. Witness 3 forwarded that email to Dr. Marrero and Witness 2 and copied Witnesses 7 and 19 (who were in the meeting), along with Witness 1, and provided some suggested language to share with Mr. Youngquist.

Mr. Youngquist described this incident during his Boardhawk podcast interview and his interview with GPMBF. In both, he said that a staff member (Witness 7) asked Witness 3 to allow Mr. Youngquist to finish a sentence because Mr. Youngquist was getting cut off. He also acknowledged he and Witness 3 had a difference of opinion relating to whether something was being implemented effectively in the District, and felt his feedback was taken offense to by Witness 3.

b. Some board members reported observing Mr. Youngquist act belittling, dismissive, or condescending towards some District staff members.

Several board members stated during their interviews that they have observed Mr. Youngquist treat some District staff members in a belittling, dismissive, or condescending manner.

Board Member 1⁶ said that she has observed Mr. Youngquist speak in a demeaning tone to Witness 1. According to Board Member 1, Mr. Youngquist speaks like he constantly wants to correct Witness 1 and tells Witness 1 he does not know the right answer. Board Member 1 also described Mr. Youngquist as on the “edge” of calling Witness 1 a liar. She explained she often jumps in to demonstrate agreement with Witness 1’s advice when these interactions occur. Although she does not feel that other board members interject as she does, she said they sometimes find other ways to demonstrate agreement or appreciation for Witness 1’s advice.

Board Member 2 has observed multiple interactions between Mr. Youngquist and Witness 1. She characterized Mr. Youngquist’s interactions with Witness 1 during executive sessions as “disrespectful” and always tense. She recalled that Mr. Youngquist told Witness 1 at one point that he did not trust him. She also observed Mr. Youngquist become unnecessarily angry with Witness 2 during a 2-on-2 meeting when Witness 2 tried to end the meeting.

Board Member 3 commented on what she perceives to be Mr. Youngquist’s accusatory approach towards staff. She said that Mr. Youngquist immediately goes to a place of distrust instead of professional courtesy. She identified specific instances, including Mr. Youngquist’s interaction with Witness 3 in April 2025, where she felt that Mr. Youngquist disagreed with what Witness 3 was presenting. She also said with respect to the PERA compensation issue, Mr. Youngquist rejected the advice of Witness 1 and sought advice from someone else regarding the issue, who happened to be white; he accepted that person’s advice, despite that person specifically saying they would not give legal advice.

Board Member 4 also said she viewed Mr. Youngquist’s behavior with respect to the PERA compensation issue as passive aggressive, and that Mr. Youngquist questioned the advice provided by staff, including Witness 1.

Board Member 4 and Board Member 5 both commented on Mr. Youngquist’s email correspondence with staff, with the former describing it as confrontational and nit-picky and the latter describing it as failing to acknowledge staff expertise and implying that Mr. Youngquist knows best.

Finally, although Board Member 6 denied having observed Mr. Youngquist act in the ways alleged, she acknowledged she would have interacted with Witness 1 differently and that a staff member could have felt Mr. Youngquist was being condescending by using the word “deceived” in his communication with the staff member.

c. Mr. Youngquist’s behavior towards District staff was noted privately and publicly multiple times between December 2023 and February 2025.

Mr. Youngquist’s behavior towards District staff was noted in private meetings between Mr.

⁶ Board members are referred to by number. The numbers do not have any significance and do not necessarily reflect the order of interviews.

Youngquist and staff or board members at various times between December 2023 and February 2025. Mr. Youngquist's behavior was also commented on during a public board meeting in January 2025.

We are aware that concerns about Mr. Youngquist's behavior were raised as far back as December 14, 2023, when Board Member 1 sent an email to Mr. Youngquist saying there was a "level of disrespectful audaciousness and privilege coming off" in his last couple of email responses and noting she was "beginning to feel a certain level of disrespect towards [herself] as well as towards Dr. Marrero's employees."

On March 21, 2024, Witness 1 sent an email regarding Mr. Youngquist's responses in an email exchange. He described Mr. Youngquist's correspondence as "disturbing, accusatory, and unprofessional," expressed his "profound discomfort and concern about the nature and implications of" Mr. Youngquist's accusations, including that information was purposefully withheld from him, and said he had never previously experienced "this sort of mistrust and doubt about [his] abilities and intelligence" from a client. Witness 1 then outlined his qualifications for his position. Following the email, Witness 1 and Mr. Youngquist met, during which time Mr. Youngquist apologized, and Witness 1 and Mr. Youngquist acknowledged they would move forward. During his Boardhawk podcast interview, Mr. Youngquist said after the meeting, he understood why Witness 1's response "came from him in the way it did" and Mr. Youngquist "walked away with a different understanding."

Several board members reached out to Mr. Youngquist after seeing Witness 1's email. Board Member 4 could not recall specifics about her conversation other than she shared some other information staff had represented to her about Mr. Youngquist's behavior, including how some staff members felt frustrated with Mr. Youngquist's lines of questioning and cancelling of 2-on-2 meetings when they wanted to share updates about their work. She noted that in addition to this conversation, she has had several other conversations with Mr. Youngquist about how staff feel when he questions them. She recalled his response was that he did not feel he was getting the information he needed.

Board Member 1 also discussed with Mr. Youngquist his email exchange with Witness 1. She explained to Mr. Youngquist that what he was saying and doing was "racist" and why. His response was that he did not believe it was racist; he was simply addressing issues and concerns, and Board Member 1's comments were making him not want to address the issues. Board Member 1 responded that he could address the issues, but "without undertones of automatically accusing people of color." She perceived Mr. Youngquist to be dismissive, annoyed, and angry by her comments.

Board Member 3 also spoke with Mr. Youngquist after Witness 1 sent his email. She shared her own feelings having worked in spaces where she felt she had to go above and beyond to prove herself and earn respect. She shared with him how, given her identity and experiences, she found his email to be demeaning and detrimental. She explained that for Witness 1 being in the position he's in and feeling that someone is challenging him based on his race, it is "harmful." She

reiterated to Mr. Youngquist to ask questions and not just accuse. Board Member 3 said Mr. Youngquist did not say much in response to her comments.

Board Member 2 also had a discussion with Mr. Youngquist about her concerns regarding his treatment of Witness 1. She chastised him for accusing Witness 1 of not being trustworthy. Mr. Youngquist's response was that Witness 1 was not providing him with the "right" information. Board Member 2 also separately spoke with Mr. Youngquist after she observed him become angry and raise his voice when Witness 2 was trying to wrap up a 2-on-2 meeting. Board Member 2 informed Mr. Youngquist she viewed his behavior as unprofessional and asked him to apologize.

Witness 1 asked Mr. Youngquist in December 2024 what kept them from having a trust relationship. According to both Witness 1 and Mr. Youngquist, Mr. Youngquist did not engage substantively in response to Witness 1's comments.

Three board members sent a letter dated December 17, 2024 that referenced Mr. Youngquist's behavior. Certain board members⁷ thereafter addressed Mr. Youngquist's behavior during a public work session on January 9, 2025. Director Xochitl Gaytán stated that she felt how Mr. Youngquist behaves towards employees is unfair, unjust, and the employees do not deserve it. Director Michelle Quattlebaum shared that board members are expected to model appropriate conduct when interacting with staff, including treating them with the respect they deserve, and that she and Mr. Youngquist had had two conversations. Director Marlene De La Rosa discussed how she was confident the Board would "continue to focus on students" and "work[] through challenging decisions . . . respectfully, professionally in partnership with Superintendent Marrero, our general counsel, our chief of staff, and all the incredible staff it takes to run and support us in our work on the Board." Director Esserman, one of the three senders of the letter, did not address behavior toward staff. Mr. Youngquist stated that he had listened closely to President Olson and the District's General Counsel who had raised specific and personal concerns, thanked them for their time and conversation, and said they had helped him change his understanding. Director Quattlebaum responded to Mr. Youngquist and stated that she "struggl[ed] to identify the accountability" in Mr. Youngquist's remarks.

Witness 2 and Mr. Youngquist had a meeting in February 2025. She claims Mr. Youngquist requested the meeting but Mr. Youngquist believes she reached out to him. She explained to Mr. Youngquist that he ignores her and does not acknowledge her and that this treatment started before he was on the Board. In Witness 2's opinion, Mr. Youngquist acted surprised by her concerns and made a statement along the lines that he is an introvert or is viewed as an introvert.

d. Mr. Youngquist's behavior did not change after it was noted privately and publicly.

Witnesses 1 and 2 do not believe Mr. Youngquist's conduct has changed. They believe Mr.

⁷ Names are used because these comments were made in publicly available footage.

Youngquist has continued to unfairly scrutinize, avoid, and even ignore them. Notably, Board Member 3 stated she did not observe a change in Mr. Youngquist's behavior towards Witness 1 subsequent to her discussion with him. No other witness interviewed who also observed Mr. Youngquist interact with Witnesses 1 and 2 described his conduct towards them as having changed.

e. Mr. Youngquist does not deny engaging critically with staff.

During his interview with GPMBF, Mr. Youngquist described himself as interested in ensuring transparency and engaging critically at a level that allows him as a board member to understand what is going on, question what results mean, and not just be "responsive to and led by the superintendent." He believes his job is to ask "rigorous questions" and "look for critical accountability." He "shares when he sees things differently." In addition, when we were discussing Board Member 1's email to Mr. Youngquist in December 2023, Mr. Youngquist denied Board Member 1's characterization, but admitted his interest is "to be able to provide criticism" and to "add to the conversation to allow work to get done that needs to be done." During Mr. Youngquist's Boardhawk podcast interview, he described himself as "passionate" and in the "legacy phase of [his] career in regard to wanting to continue to ensure that strong leadership is developed."

Mr. Youngquist described an interaction that occurred before he joined the Board that we found informative and therefore believe it is relevant to discuss here. In 2022, Mr. Youngquist repeatedly contacted Dr. Marrero and one of his staff members about school safety issues. Mr. Youngquist's email dated September 19, 2022, stated "My concern, as stated previously, is that you and your team just do not know what to do. . . . From what we have seen, your leadership team is not currently prepared to act, to respond to threats and safety events, and to support schools in ways that mitigate the impact of threats and violent events." Witness 11, who received the emails, felt the communications were rude and inappropriate. Witness 5 and Witness 11 eventually met with Mr. Youngquist, and both claimed he berated them during the meeting. Mr. Youngquist admitted during his interview that he accused the staff members of not knowing what to do and said he had been doing the work for 35 years and when work is not being done, he will use his voice.

Some witnesses who have positive relationships with Mr. Youngquist and did not report personally experiencing condescending behavior described Mr. Youngquist in general terms consistent with how Mr. Youngquist described himself. For example, Witness 6, who has a positive relationship with Mr. Youngquist, described Mr. Youngquist as "tenacious" and said that if he does not get the answer he wants, he will find a way. Witness 13 described multiple instances of Mr. Youngquist "pushing" people hard, including taking a harsh and serious tone in one situation where Mr. Youngquist felt the data being presented was obfuscating what was really at issue.

(2) Evidence that tends not to support the allegations

a. Some District staff members said they have not observed Mr. Youngquist treat themselves or others in a belittling, dismissive, or condescending manner.

Some District staff members interviewed stated they had not observed Mr. Youngquist treat themselves or others in a belittling, dismissive, or condescending manner. Witness 12, a person of color, explained that when she has presented to the Board, she has not experienced Mr. Youngquist to ask any more or less questions than other board members, nor does she find his tone to be any more or less respectful. She also has not observed Mr. Youngquist treat Witness 1 or 2 in a dismissive or condescending way. With respect to his questioning of Witness 1, she has observed Mr. Youngquist ask for “clarity around things.”

Witness 13, a white staff member, has not experienced or observed this behavior, and noted that on the PERA compensation issue mentioned above, Mr. Youngquist pushed many staff members, and not just Witness 1, hard on the issue. Several other white staff members said they had not observed or experienced the alleged behavior, specifically Witnesses 14, 15, 16, and 17. Witness 18, a person of color, said she has not experienced the alleged behavior and while she had observed Mr. Youngquist often question data, she had not seen him push back on data dismissively or disrespectfully.

b. Two board members said they have not witnessed Mr. Youngquist treat District staff members in a belittling, dismissive, or condescending manner.

During his interview, Board Member 5 explained that while he has had “exhaustive” conversations with Witness 1 about what Witness 1 feels to be Mr. Youngquist’s ongoing disrespect, Board Member 5 has not himself witnessed that behavior or the behavior referenced in Witness 1’s March 2024 email.

Board Member 6 said she has not observed Mr. Youngquist act in a belittling, dismissive, or condescending manner towards staff. She described him as “even keeled” in his interactions with staff, and that he asks questions that in her opinion are reasonable and come from a place of “curiosity.” She said that if any board member had behaved in the ways alleged by Dr. Marrero, it was another board member who on one occasion grew very frustrated with staff during a meeting about the closure of charter schools.

c. Mr. Youngquist denies treating District staff members in a belittling, dismissive, or condescending manner.

During his interview, Mr. Youngquist denied treating District staff members in the ways alleged by Dr. Marrero and appeared surprised and offended that people interpreted his behavior in such a way. This reaction was consistent with statements made during his Boardhawk podcast interview that he had largely not previously heard of the accusations in Dr. Marrero’s letter (some of which are outside the scope of GPMBF’s investigation).

Mr. Youngquist said other than the one email exchange with Witness 1 that prompted Witness 1's email, he is not aware of any other issues with Witness 1 that could have prompted Dr. Marrero's letter. We asked Mr. Youngquist specifically about his interactions with Witness 1 related to the PERA compensation issue mentioned above. Mr. Youngquist said his concern was how deeply Witness 1 was working with the Board on the issue and whether Witness 1 was making it a priority. He said the issue had not previously needed to be looked into, so there was a lot of "depth" needed, and that he asked significant questions of outside PERA counsel too.

Mr. Youngquist does not recall having interacted with Witness 2 when he was director of principal talent management or ever raising his voice with her when she tried to end a 2-on-2 meeting. He said there was one time when Witness 2 provided a time check and he said he still had questions. He recalled a situation during an early board meeting where he felt tersely regarded by Witness 2. We asked if it would surprise Mr. Youngquist if people described him as treating Witness 2 differently than Witness 7 and he could not think of any reason for that opinion.

Mr. Youngquist denied not shaking Witness 5's hand. He also denied treating [REDACTED] in the ways alleged, including by asking critical questions, but acknowledged he has not engaged in a conversational relationship with Witness 5.

Mr. Youngquist could not recall if he refused to meet with Witness 8 but said he simply may not have responded.

Mr. Youngquist could not recall getting angry with Witness 4 regarding a mix-up of an Executive Limitations policy number and does not think that happened.

Mr. Youngquist recalled an interaction with Witness 9 where he asked questions about survey data during a 2-on-2 meeting. Mr. Youngquist said he asked a "reasonable question" about the level of the survey response and validity but denied asking Witness 9 questions in the ways alleged.

Mr. Youngquist denied interacting with Witness 3 in the manner alleged. He explained that based on information he had recently learned from an organization, he questioned Witness 3's representation of how far along the District was with respect to one area. He said there was a "point of disagreement" because his feeling was why is Witness 3 representing something is happening when it was not. Mr. Youngquist felt defensiveness in response from Witness 3 that he had not experienced before from Witness 3 or any other staff member.

Overall, Mr. Youngquist said the comments he has made and the questions he has asked are not atypical for a board member and not inappropriate. He said that he "maybe" asks "more direct" questions than other board members. He also emphasized his view that the Board has developed a culture of defensiveness of the work to the point where "even a light touch" of criticism or a question is "taken as a deep offense."

d. Mr. Youngquist denies having certain conversations about his behavior that were described by other witnesses.

Mr. Youngquist denies having certain conversations about his behavior that were identified by other witnesses. During his Boardhawk podcast interview, Mr. Youngquist said that other than the concerns raised in Witness 1's March 2024 email exchange, a concern raised by Witness 2 related to Mr. Youngquist's treatment of her many years ago, and the interaction with Witness 3, he did not have any other indicators of question or concern about his behavior prior to Dr. Marrero's letter.

Mr. Youngquist does not deny receiving an email from Board Member 1 in December 2023 about his behavior. However, he explained that he disagreed with how Board Member 1 characterized the underlying email exchange between Mr. Youngquist and Witness 1, that the characterization was "in character" for Board Member 1 and how she "escalates" matters, and that she was interested in "controlling" Mr. Youngquist as a board member in a way that he did not need to be responsive to.

Mr. Youngquist said that after Witness 1 sent his email in March 2024, Mr. Youngquist spoke with Witness 1 and Board Members 1 and 3. With respect to Board Member 3, he said "she didn't have a real strong take" on the exchange. He stated that he did not speak with Board Members 2 or 4.

He said he has had only one conversation with Board Member 4 about his behavior and it was following the January 2025 work session.

Mr. Youngquist does not recall having a conversation with Board Member 2 his interaction with Witness 2 where he raised his voice and does not recall Board Member 2 telling him to apologize.

Mr. Youngquist explained that Witness 1 confronted him about their relationship at a conference in December 2024 when Witness 1 was inebriated. Mr. Youngquist said that he did not understand what Witness 1 was trying to accomplish with the conversation and the conversation made Mr. Youngquist feel uneasy. As a result, he did not have a follow-up conversation with Witness 1.

Mr. Youngquist admitted he met with Witness 2 in February 2025. However, he explained that during the meeting Witness 2 said only that something happened in 2012 that frustrated or upset her. According to Mr. Youngquist, Witness 2 would not specify what specifically happened, and she did not mention any other behavior by Mr. Youngquist.

(3) Analysis and Findings

It is more likely than not that Mr. Youngquist engaged in belittling, dismissive, and

condescending behavior towards some District staff members, and that Mr. Youngquist's behavior did not change after it was noted in public and private settings.

As a preliminary matter, we found Witnesses 1, 2, and 3, who were the primary witnesses to identify being subject to Mr. Youngquist's condescending behavior, to be credible in their accounts of Mr. Youngquist's treatment of them. Each witness' statement was internally consistent, referred to specific details, and was consistent with additional substantial evidence gathered during the investigation. Additionally, we found it persuasive that the balance of evidence supported their recitation of what happened. Specifically, the behavior Witnesses 1, 2, and 3 described was consistently described by other witnesses who had observed or experienced it, and who were careful to delineate between what they had observed and what they had not.

We found statements from Witness 7 about Mr. Youngquist's treatment of Witnesses 1, 2, and 3 in particular to be persuasive because she was clear that Mr. Youngquist had not treated her in the ways alleged, but that she had seen him interact dismissively or unprofessionally with Witnesses 1, 2, and 3. Given her role, she is uniquely situated to have more opportunities to observe Mr. Youngquist interact with staff members than other witnesses interviewed. She provided very specific examples—with Witness 1, she identified comments made by Mr. Youngquist related to the PERA compensation issue; with Witness 2, she explicitly distinguished Mr. Youngquist's treatment of herself and Witness 2; and with Witness 3, she recalled the 2-on-2 meeting in April 2025 in detail. Witness 7 and Mr. Youngquist's accounts about the April 2025 meeting differed in one respect, specifically Witness 7 said she interjected during the meeting at one point to ask Witness 3 to slow down, whereas Mr. Youngquist said that Witness 7 told Witness 3 to stop interrupting him. We find Witness 7 to be credible given the internal consistency in her statement and with Witness 3's email and Witness 19's recollection of the meeting. And even if it were true that Witness 7 told Witness 3 to stop interrupting him, it could still be true that Mr. Youngquist was rude, dismissive, and disrespectful to Witness 3 in a way that Witnesses 7, 19, and 3 found noteworthy or shocking.

We also found it persuasive that numerous witnesses interviewed pointed to other board members as examples of individuals who ask critical questions but do so in a way that is respectful and constructive, and different than Mr. Youngquist. We did not get the impression that staff members were complaining because they did not like being asked questions—they took issue specifically with Mr. Youngquist's tone and delivery.

Mr. Youngquist did not deny being critical in his interactions with staff. In fact, he embraced this approach in both his interview with GPMBF and with Boardhawk. He however denied acting in belittling, dismissive, or condescending ways. We did not find Mr. Youngquist's statements about his behavior with respect to Witnesses 1, 2, and 3 to be credible. During his interview, Mr. Youngquist's explanation of his email exchange with Witness 1 was that he was asking for more information, had not received the information, and was concerned he was being manipulated. Mr. Youngquist felt that Witness 1's email response was "so strong" with regard to the "offense taken" that Mr. Youngquist wanted to understand the response. They met, and Mr. Youngquist said during his Boardhawk podcast interview that he left the meeting with a "different

understanding.” We find this acknowledgment inconsistent with Mr. Youngquist’s denial of treating Witness 1 in the ways alleged. Mr. Youngquist also did not have an explanation for why he did not follow up with Witness 1 after Witness 1 asked him what could be done about their relationship in December 2024 other than describing Witness 1 as inebriated. Witness 1 denied being inebriated in the way insinuated by Mr. Youngquist but admitted approaching Mr. Youngquist in a social setting where he and others had consumed alcohol. Even if Witness 1 appeared to be intoxicated, we find it persuasive that Mr. Youngquist said during our interview and on the Boardhawk podcast that he was not aware of any other issues, including with Witness 1, between the March 2024 email exchange and Dr. Marrero’s letter.

We did not find Mr. Youngquist’s statement with respect to his meeting with Witness 2 to be credible. He said that Witness 2 did not provide any specifics during their conversation about his behavior. We concluded it is inconceivable that a meeting focused on Mr. Youngquist’s treatment of Witness 2, and that lasted by his own admission for at least 30 minutes, would not include a specific discussion of Witness 2’s specific concerns about his behavior. Even if Witness 2 did not provide specific examples during the meeting of his concerning conduct, Mr. Youngquist’s failure to follow up with Witness 2 is indicative of dismissiveness of Witness 2’s concerns.

We also did not find Mr. Youngquist’s explanation of his interaction with Witness 3 to be credible given the witness accounts that corroborated Witness 3’s account of the interaction. Mr. Youngquist seemed to be careful with his words during his interview, acknowledging there was a disagreement; in his Boardhawk interview, he said Witness 3 appeared offended by his comments.

We found it compelling that Mr. Youngquist’s descriptions of his own conduct (of being critical, asking rigorous questions, sharing when he sees things differently, etc.) are still consistent with the conduct alleged. Numerous witnesses described Mr. Youngquist asking repeated questions, of seemingly trying to obtain an answer different than the one being presented, and of acting like he is more knowledgeable than the person he is questioning. This attitude is also consistent with the explanation he gave for his outreach about safety in 2022—he has been doing the work for 35 years, and when work is not being done, he will use his voice. Mr. Youngquist was also inconsistent in describing his approach compared to other board members—he said first that the other board members defend “every word” of the District and Superintendent, and later said he is as critical as some board members and more critical than other board members. Moreover, although Board Member 6 denied having observed Mr. Youngquist act in the ways alleged, she acknowledged she would have interacted with Witness 1 differently than Mr. Youngquist and that a staff member could have felt Mr. Youngquist was being condescending by using the word “deceived.”

We also conclude that a preponderance of the evidence supports the conclusion that Mr. Youngquist’s behavior towards some District staff members has not changed despite it being noted in public and private settings by staff and board members. Witnesses 1 and 2 said Mr. Youngquist exhibits a continued lack of engagement and dismissiveness towards them. We

found it most persuasive that Board Member 3 specifically told us how she had explained to Mr. Youngquist why, based on her identity, she understood Witness 1's reaction in the March 2024 email exchange. Yet during his interview, Mr. Youngquist said that Board Member 3 did not have a "strong take" on the email exchange. We found Board Member 3 to be credible in her account of their conversation, and her comment that Mr. Youngquist's behavior has not changed. She was careful with her words and hesitant to be critical of Mr. Youngquist. For the reasons already discussed, including Mr. Youngquist's comments about him not being aware of any other interactions with Witnesses 1 and 2 and the fact he did not engage substantively with Witness 1 after he learned of Witness 1's ongoing concerns and during a meeting with Witness 2 that was supposed to be about her concerns, we have no reason to believe his behavior changed. Other substantial evidence corroborates this, specifically Witness 3's interaction with Mr. Youngquist in April 2025. While this was Witness 3's first negative experience with Mr. Youngquist, it is notable this interaction occurred months after numerous conversations with Mr. Youngquist about his treatment of staff had occurred.

B. Whether Mr. Youngquist Exhibited Bias in Interactions with District Leaders of Color and Whether it was Deliberate⁸

(1) Evidence that tends to support the allegation

a. Based on their observations, some staff and board members perceive Mr. Youngquist as treating some District staff members of color less favorably than some white staff members.

Multiple witnesses interviewed shared that based on their observations, Mr. Youngquist interacts with some white staff members differently than some staff members of color. Several witnesses pointed to the treatment of one senior white staff member in particular because this individual presents data to the Board. Witness 6 observed that Mr. Youngquist "affirms" this white staff member and is collegial, whereas he is combative with Witness 1 and uses a "nice nasty" tone. Witness 5 said he has never seen Mr. Youngquist scrutinize this white staff member on the topics he presents on, in contrast to how he scrutinizes and challenges Witness 5 and his team when they present data during 2-on-2s. He gave the example that presenting, for instance, that 48% of African American students read on grade level according to Read Act data, would be met with questions such as, "Are you sure? Based on what assessment? What about i-Ready?" Witness 2 contrasted Mr. Youngquist's treatment of Witness 1 and another staff member of color with that of the same senior white staff member. She said Mr. Youngquist is more respectful of the senior white staff member and she has never observed him question the staff member's positions or information presented.

⁸ This section addresses GPMBF's questions 3 and 4, as identified on page 3, because these questions involve substantially similar evidence. This section also corresponds with Dr. Marrero's second categorical allegation relating to behavior reflecting racist and oppressive undertones.

Board Member 1 commented on a “visible strain” apparent when Mr. Youngquist interacts with Witness 1 as opposed to the senior white staff member. Board Member 3 noted this senior white staff member is held in high regard but also acknowledged he is also treated more favorably than others. Board Member 2 observed that Mr. Youngquist simply does not treat “white professionals” the same as staff of color.

Witness 3 also stated he did not observe Mr. Youngquist interact with the same white staff member and another senior white leader in the same way as he did with Witness 5 during the April 2025 meeting described above. Board Member 5 realized during his interview he could not recall a time Mr. Youngquist interacted with any of the four white staff members we asked about who had been identified as individuals who had presented to the Board; as he was reflecting during the interview, he shared he found it “remarkable” that Mr. Youngquist has not asked critical questions of them. In contrast, Board Member 5 recalled certain critical questions posed by Mr. Youngquist to staff members of color. Dr. Marrero also observed that the individuals whom Mr. Youngquist does not treat as “less than” are the white staff members on Dr. Marrero’s team.

Board Member 1 observed that Mr. Youngquist questions the judgment and education of staff of color as opposed to white staff members. She explained that because of her upbringing and background, she notices this sort of behavior and finds it to be disrespectful. She identified a specific instance where she heard Mr. Youngquist make a comment about a staff member of color’s education and experience, as well as his accent. Particularly because of the reference to accent, she believes the comment reflected bias. She also described another instance where Mr. Youngquist did not accept advice given by Witness 1 until that same advice was given by a white attorney who served as outside counsel for the District.

Board Member 2 stated that she has never seen Mr. Youngquist interact with a white staff member as he did with Witness 2 when he became angry with Witness 2 and raised his voice.

No witness interviewed expressed the opinion that the white staff members we asked about are stronger performers than the staff members of color we asked about.

b. Based on their personal experiences, some District staff members of color perceive Mr. Youngquist as treating them less favorably.

Some staff members of color perceive Mr. Youngquist to be treating them less favorably based on their race because of Mr. Youngquist’s tone, questioning of the staff members’ competence, distrust for the information they present, and/or his lack of engagement with them. Witnesses 1 and 2 had the strongest feelings about Mr. Youngquist’s interactions with them, and both identified these reasons as leading them to believe it was due to their race. These feelings were independently validated by Board Member 3, who stated emails between Mr. Youngquist and Witness 1, on which she and other board members were copied, were “hard to read” and said Witness 1’s March 2024 statement in response to Mr. Youngquist resonated with her based on her own experiences.

Witness 5 described the way Mr. Youngquist speaks to him as “condescending, questioning, demeaning, and dismissive.” He also noted that Mr. Youngquist consistently seems to avoid him. He said that other white board members do not speak to him or interact with him in that way, and that other board members stop in the hallway to talk to him. During his interview, Mr. Youngquist admitted he tries to avoid Witness 5 because he wants to keep his critical questions to Dr. Marrero in honor of the hierarchical structure.

Other than Witness 9, who is a white woman, none of the white staff members interviewed perceived Mr. Youngquist to engage with them in this way, even though they present financial, graduation, and safety data, to the Board. Witness 13, a white male, said that since Mr. Youngquist has been on the Board, he has been “mostly complimentary” of Witness 13’s work, although when Mr. Youngquist has a “perspective” on something, he pushes back. He described a specific example during executive session when Mr. Youngquist challenged him. Witness 13, however, did not view Mr. Youngquist’s comments as “personal attacks,” but as an effort to “make sure things were done right.” Witness 13 also noted that Mr. Youngquist has never pushed back “particularly hard” during his presentations. Witness 14, a white male, recalled a recent presentation in June 2025 where he told Mr. Youngquist that something was not possible. In response, Mr. Youngquist was respectful and did not challenge his opinion. Witness 15, a white male, believes that every board member, including Mr. Youngquist, has asked him questions during his presentations but doesn’t recall Mr. Youngquist interacting with him in the ways alleged by Dr. Marrero, even when he addressed a topic that Mr. Youngquist considers to be a priority. Witness 16, a white female who had also presented to the Board on a topic that Mr. Youngquist identified as a priority, could not think of a time when Mr. Youngquist asked her a question or commented on the data she presented. She was “surprised” as she reflected during the interview on the fact she has not received questions or comments from Mr. Youngquist.

c. Some District staff members perceive Mr. Youngquist as unsupportive and dismissive of the District’s work.

Some witnesses, including Witnesses 5, 6, and 8, described Mr. Youngquist as unsupportive, dismissive, and/or unappreciative of the District’s work. Witness 5 also said that rather than acknowledge the District has made significant progress, Mr. Youngquist is generally skeptical of the work. Witness 18, who does not view Mr. Youngquist’s questioning of data as necessarily dismissive, described his refusal to celebrate the District’s progress as “a little odd.” Witness 17, a white male, also described Mr. Youngquist as “not complimentary” of the District’s progress.

Witness 6 said the District’s higher student graduation rate is simply “not good enough” for Mr. Youngquist, despite what Witness 6 views as improvement compared to the District’s historical performance under Dr. Marrero’s predecessors. Witness 6 later mentioned he thought Mr. Youngquist would celebrate closing the gap in math proficiency between white students and Black and Hispanic students, as other Board members have, but Mr. Youngquist treats every achievement as “never enough.” Witness 6 also specifically discussed Mr. Youngquist’s reaction

to the DPS Minds program⁹ as demonstrative of his disregard for academic achievement under Dr. Marrero's leadership. Witness 6 said student achievement in the District improved as a result of the program. While other board members appeared to support the program based on its results, Mr. Youngquist said DPS Minds was a "waste of time."

Witness 11 recounted one instance that stuck out to him concerning elementary school data. Mr. Youngquist made comments that the progress wasn't good enough, there was more to the picture, and staff were hiding the true figures. Witness 11 said he has observed Mr. Youngquist treat all data like this and implied that Mr. Youngquist dismissing the data felt like he was dismissing black and brown students.

Witness 9 said there is a level of respect, deference, and recognition for progress that the rest of the Board gives, in contrast to Mr. Youngquist. She said the rest of the Board recognizes that significant progress for a school district of 90,000 students is a "Herculean effort" and respects the staff's work and how difficult it is.

Witness 12 explained that disparities did not grow overnight and said asking the Superintendent and his staff to close those disparities in a short period of time feels inequitable and unfair.

Witness 14 said during his interview that he would not be surprised if Mr. Youngquist described progress as insignificant, although he had not heard it himself. Witness 14 said that if the perspective is that gaps need to be called out until they are closed, Witness 14 himself would prefer "insufficient" and not "insignificant"; to him, "insignificant" feels inflammatory and possibly unrepresentative.

d. Dr. Marrero and other witnesses described Mr. Youngquist as treating Dr. Marrero in a disrespectful way.

During his interview, Dr. Marrero reported he has experienced condescending and disruptive conduct from Mr. Youngquist, and he attributed it to race.

Witness 1 said that shortly after Mr. Youngquist joined the Board, he started alleging that Dr. Marrero was untruthful and generally "getting in Dr. Marrero's face about a lot of things." Witness 6 said that he has witnessed Mr. Youngquist use a "nice nasty" tone with Dr. Marrero. Board Member 2 has observed Mr. Youngquist treat Dr. Marrero in a way that appears to be "personal" rather than "objective or constructive."

Witness 4 observed that when Dr. Marrero won Superintendent of the Year, Mr. Youngquist did not clap at all. We confirmed that when Board President Olson acknowledged this award during a board meeting, Mr. Youngquist stood up with the other board members but was the only board

⁹ Witness 6 said the DPS Minds program, which was adopted from a Los Angeles school district, focuses on identifying areas for improvement in individual schools by bringing together and engaging in a dialogue with school leadership.

member who did not clap.

(1) Evidence that does not support the allegations

a. There is no evidence of overt racial animus.

No witness interviewed described Mr. Youngquist as saying or doing anything that exhibited overt racism, such as the use of racial slurs. In the FaithBridge podcast, Mr. Youngquist denied being racist.

b. Some District staff members of color do not feel they have been treated less favorably, and one white staff member shared that they experienced the same conduct.

Some senior staff members of color did not report feeling treated less favorably because of their race, specifically Witnesses 6, 7, 12, and 18. Witnesses 9 and 10 attended the same meeting with Mr. Youngquist in March 2024. During her interview, Witness 10 shared that she felt like she, a woman of color, and Witness 9, a white woman, were treated the same way by Mr. Youngquist. Witness 4, who was identified by multiple individuals as being treated less favorably, recalled only one experience that he had with Mr. Youngquist that was “uncalled for.”

Witness 9, a white woman, felt she was treated in a condescending way by Mr. Youngquist on multiple occasions in 2024, and that he questioned her intelligence, ability, and understanding of concepts central to her job.

c. Witnesses have identified other potential motivations for Mr. Youngquist’s interactions, including that he is seeking transparency and has high expectations.

We asked witnesses about Dr. Marrero’s allegation that Mr. Youngquist described the District’s progress as “insignificant” and consistently dismissed equity-focused progress. Witnesses could not recall having witnessed Mr. Youngquist call the progress insignificant and many were unsure what Dr. Marrero meant by equity-focused progress.

Mr. Youngquist described his interest in being able to question and engage in a level of criticism of the District that is reasonable and helps the District move forward. He does not believe the Board is seeing even the “surface level” data the board has the responsibility to see. He believes Dr. Marrero “hides data” and “disallows the level of transparency that the community deserves.” He believes the accusations being made are in response to his interest in ensuring transparency, his ability to be critical at a level that allows the Board to understand what is happening, and his need to be able to engage as board members and “not just responsive to and led by” Dr. Marrero. Mr. Youngquist also said he is interested in a level of accountability that says that as a District, “we have significantly better work to do” to gain results over time, and that the District needs to accelerate the work. During his interview, Mr. Youngquist denied he is dismissive of equity-

focused progress and said he does not know why Dr. Marrero made the allegation. He also believes Dr. Marrero is interested in marginalizing him as a leader because Mr. Youngquist is interested in a level of accountability that says the District needs to do significantly better work.

Mr. Youngquist explained that the meeting cited by Dr. Marrero involved Mr. Youngquist asking whether a one percent increase on an annual basis was a significant increase. Mr. Youngquist expressed it was not significant because there is a 50 percentage point gap between the performance of students of color relative to white students and that the learning of those students needed to be accelerated in a significant way.

The comments Mr. Youngquist made during his interview with GPMBF were consistent with comments he made on the FaithBridge podcast, specifically that the “heart” of the problem is “a level of expectation that we have that isn’t what it needs to be.”

Board Member 4 explained that she viewed some of Mr. Youngquist’s early interactions as him being unable to shake campaign activism. In her opinion, after someone runs for their board position and spends time attacking others and saying they are going to change X or Y, it can take time to shake off that approach.

Witness 6 commented that Mr. Youngquist’s constituents are critical of Dr. Marrero’s work, and Mr. Youngquist has to “deliver” to his constituents. Mr. Youngquist himself acknowledged the perspective that Mr. Youngquist was elected to the board in order to make sure Dr. Marrero and his team are held accountable.

Other witnesses also believe Mr. Youngquist has high expectations and thinks the District should be doing better with, for example, closing gaps in math proficiency. Witness 13 explained there is a difference between saying the District has to do better and dismissing specific types of progress, which he said would be concerning. For example, if a board member was dismissive of the substantial change in graduation rates of students of color, that would be “wrong.” Witness 13 did not say that Mr. Youngquist was dismissive of a change in graduation rates of color, only that Mr. Youngquist thought the change was occurring too slowly.

Witness 12 perceives Mr. Youngquist’s intent when he asks her questions to be to get more detail. She also noted he could be trying to reconcile his perception of the District today with his experience as an employee in the District.

Board Member 3 believes Mr. Youngquist thinks information is being hidden from board members, which leads to his accusatory approach towards staff. When asked why she believes this, Board Member 3 said, “he says it.” She also said that overall, Mr. Youngquist seems to believe the District isn’t moving as fast as it should be in terms of progress.

Board Member 6’s perspective is that Mr. Youngquist asks a lot of questions that come from a place of “curiosity.”

Board Member 5 shared that it seems Mr. Youngquist's questions indicate his desire to get into the weeds and be involved at an administrative level that is inconsistent with the delineation of responsibilities between the Superintendent and his staff and the Board.

Other witnesses suggested motivations that related to other allegations in Dr. Marrero's letter, such as Mr. Youngquist's potential desire to be Superintendent.

d. We could not confirm District leaders were treated differently based on our independent review of publicly available board meetings.

As stated, we reviewed dozens of hours of publicly available board meeting recordings, which included regular board meetings, work sessions, and some other meetings. We noticed that during many board meetings, Mr. Youngquist offered minimal comments, and his tone and body language appeared neutral. He occasionally seemed inattentive, looking at his phone or computer instead of the presenter. Sometimes he asked the presenter questions and offered comments, which occasionally appeared repetitive or to possibly concern issues not relevant to the board's scope of work. Sometimes he participated in discussions where participants, including Mr. Youngquist, occasionally talked over each other. And sometimes he would not turn around when presenters were speaking, but it appeared that could be because a speaker sat behind Mr. Youngquist and several other people in the room also do not turn around when someone behind them is speaking. Overall, we were not able to definitively discern whether Mr. Youngquist's interactions were different based on whether he was engaging with people of color versus white staff members.

We did, however, observe that on several occasions Mr. Youngquist's comments and questions either directly or indirectly related to the responsibilities of the Superintendent or generated conversation around those responsibilities, which could be construed as being critical of Dr. Marrero.

(2) Analysis and Findings

Viewing the totality of the evidence, we conclude it is more likely than not that Mr. Youngquist exhibited bias in interactions with some District leaders of color. However, a preponderance of the evidence does not support the conclusion that such bias was deliberate.

Witnesses 1 and 2, both individuals of color, spoke at length regarding their perceptions that Mr. Youngquist treated them differently based on their race. We found both witnesses credible in their accounts of Mr. Youngquist's treatment of them, noting not only their internal consistency, detail, and demeanor in recounting Mr. Youngquist's behavior, but also the fact that multiple other witnesses interviewed stated they think highly of, and trust, both Witnesses 1 and 2. Importantly, several witnesses interviewed stated they had no reason to doubt Witnesses 1 and 2's perceptions that Mr. Youngquist treated them differently based on their race. One witness, Witness 17 stated he has not observed either Witness 1 or 2 to hastily or casually accuse others of engaging in racism.

As part of our analysis, we considered whether Witnesses 1 and 2 were improperly motivated to allege Mr. Youngquist exhibited bias towards them due to their race. Though Mr. Youngquist suggested both witnesses may be motivated to share false information as subordinates of Dr. Marrero with concomitant concerns about job security, we did not identify any corroborative evidence of such improper motive. We also considered the fact two witnesses raised “gossip” and “confirmation bias” as potential contributors to the perception that Mr. Youngquist has exhibited bias towards some staff members. To account for this concern, we took care to place less weight on generalized statements lacking in specificity.

Throughout our investigation, we remained cognizant of the distinction between perceived or subjectively experienced bias and objectively observable bias. While we do not discount subjective perception, given the potential import of this distinction to the allegations, we inquired at length as to whether notable differences existed between Mr. Youngquist’s treatment of white staff members as opposed to staff members of color. Among the 27 witnesses interviewed (excluding Mr. Youngquist), individual witness opinions diverged as to whether they experienced biased conduct from Mr. Youngquist. We noted white staff members—even those who present on data and issues Mr. Youngquist has identified as a priority—largely did not feel they received inappropriate or disrespectful pushback from Mr. Youngquist. In contrast, several staff members of color, in addition to Witnesses 1 and 2, described feeling Mr. Youngquist treated them less favorably than white staff members. When asked what he believed accounted for this perceived disparity, Mr. Youngquist attributed the difference to certain individuals presenting on “factual data” that is “purely operational,” and thus, of less interest to him than academic assessment. Undercutting Mr. Youngquist’s explanation, however, is the fact multiple witnesses identified exactly this type of factual and operational data as both central to the board’s responsibility and a particular focus for Mr. Youngquist.

In reaching our conclusions, we acknowledge and carefully consider the fact that the majority of Dr. Marrero’s senior staff members are persons of color. We recognize this creates a natural skew in the findings, given there are few comparators towards whom Mr. Youngquist’s conduct can be analyzed. However, we find it particularly notable that Mr. Youngquist’s behavior towards Witness 1 was severe enough that Witness 1 felt it necessary to raise explicit concerns about racial bias in via email. It is similarly compelling that Mr. Youngquist’s behavior was problematic enough that multiple board members addressed it with Mr. Youngquist directly on several occasions, dating back to December of 2023—right after Mr. Youngquist assumed his board seat. The nature of those conversations between Mr. Youngquist and board members also cannot be overlooked, as some board members specifically recounted telling Mr. Youngquist that staff members’ reactions resonated with them due to their own personal experiences related to their identities. Nonetheless, according to multiple witnesses, Mr. Youngquist’s behavior did not change even after these concerns were raised. While Mr. Youngquist contended nothing had ever been represented to him about engaging in belittling, dismissive, or condescending behavior towards staff members, this representation was controverted by the totality of the evidence and, thus, we did not find it credible.

We are unable to reach a conclusion as to whether Mr. Youngquist deliberately acted in a biased manner towards some District leaders of color based on the available evidence. We note some of the evidence obtained may lead to the inference that Mr. Youngquist's conduct is deliberate: specifically, Mr. Youngquist's conduct has not changed despite staff and board members specifically addressing concerns with him; Mr. Youngquist's failure to follow up with Witnesses 1 or 2 about their concerns; and Mr. Youngquist's general dismissiveness of the allegations and seemingly disingenuous responses during his interview, creating the perception that he did not find them to be of import because of his mission as a board member.

However, the investigation did not uncover any evidence of overt or intentionally biased conduct by Mr. Youngquist. Moreover, it is conceivable that Mr. Youngquist's conduct—in particular, pushing back on data and asking critical and/or repetitive questions—is consistent with what he views to be his mission as a board member.