



**Statement From Memphis-Shelby County Schools Board of Education  
Chair Joyce Dorse Coleman to WREG News Channel 3 on ARP  
Homeless Grant  
Monday, March 3, 2025**

Since I was not in a position to respond to you before my board meeting last week, I want the opportunity to share with you my position now. After reviewing your report, I feel that it is important to clarify a few items. When I submitted the resolution for Dr. Marie Feagins' termination, she was clearly being dishonest about the availability of ARP Homeless grant funding to the District. Under Dr. Feagins' leadership, the District *did* miss the application deadline in September 2024. The state *did* request that the funding be returned in October 2024. District staff independently confirmed with the McKinney-Vento State Coordinator for the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) in early December that, because the funds were not obligated by the September 30, 2024 deadline, the funds were not available to the District and had been returned to the U.S. Department of Education.

At the December 3 meeting, Dr. Feagins did not provide these details, rather assuring the Board that the funds were leftover and still accessible to the district. After the December 3 meeting, MSCS Assistant Superintendent of Operations Tito Langston contacted the TDOE and asked TDOE to allow MSCS to submit the application and keep the funding. After Mr. Langston's contact with the TDOE, they agreed to allow MSCS to keep the funding. As you reported, that application or plan was not submitted until December 24, 2024. At the time that Dr. Feagins publicly assured the Board that the funds were still available, neither she nor anyone else at the District had any similar assurance from the state that funding would be made available despite the District's failure to meet the deadline.

Though I am grateful to Mr. Langston that he was able to work through this issue with the state to secure some funding mechanism on behalf of our

students and their families, that does not remove the fact that Dr. Feagins was intentionally dishonest with the Board when she failed to fully disclose what she knew to be the true status of the grant at the time she was asked.

When the District failed to secure the funds, we had to restructure the funding that narrowed the use of the funds from a much broader range of potential services that would have directly impacted our homeless student population to only being approved to reimburse salaries and expenses for employees and contractors who provided homeless support services. In other words, had the deadline to obligate the funds been met, we would have had much more flexibility to use the funds in ways in which the grant was originally intended. So, though the funding was eventually approved, the Board cannot be sure that it was spent in the most effective manner for student supports. Dr. Feagins' failure to fully disclose that to the Board was also problematic.

During the staff reductions at Central Office, Dr. Feagins disbanded the grants compliance department, which would've managed this process. A consequence of lacking a detailed restructuring plan, this contributed to the lack of preparation and forethought that resulted in Dr. Feagins' dishonesty with the Board and the public at the December 3 meeting. It was another example in a pattern of dishonesty and behavior not conducive to effective operation of the District. I could no longer ignore this pattern that could prove even more detrimental in the future. There was a tangible impact to our homeless students that, as a governing body, we had every right and expectation of which to be kept fully and honestly informed.

The Board has a duty to act in the best interest of students, families and taxpayers. When leadership neglects its responsibilities – particularly at the expense of our most at-risk students – accountability is not optional. Any claims suggesting that recent leadership decisions by the board were unjustified ignore the clear facts: homeless students were denied the full panoply of services they were entitled to and for which the ARP grant was intended, the Board was intentionally misled about it and the Board acted to ensure that such failures and lack of candor with the Board do not continue.

Joyce Dorse Coleman  
Chair, Memphis-Shelby County Schools Board of Education