



**GUATEMALA US-FL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

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Fort Myers, Florida

October 18<sup>th</sup> 2021

To: Lee County School Superintendent, School Board, Newspaper-Media Wink News, Local Guatemala and Latino Community and Latino Leaders.

Ref: Chris Patricca President of Florida School Board Association and Board Member of the Lee County School District. Inappropriate remarks towards our Guatemala School Students in Lee County.

**The Guatemala US-FL Chamber of Commerce**

Is formally making the same demands other members of the community have made that School Board Member Chris Patricca who also is the President of the Florida School Board Association resign her position in both mentioned capacities.

Based on Ms. Patricca's recent comments about Guatemalan students which were racist, xenophobic and most certainly false, especially with regard to this quote reportedly made by Ms. Patricca, "The biggest challenge that those principals are facing is getting them out of the bathroom because they've never seen running water before, so they go into the bathroom and they turn the water faucet on, and they turn it off and they flush the toilet and they're fascinated by plumbing."

I also found her other statements even more demeaning and condescending, where in a public school meeting she responded to another board member when questioned about her racist comments she stated "I did not make it up, I misspoke." This only means she believes what she said to be true when in fact it is a lie. Her demeanor and tone was one of disgust and anger for even being questioned.

Your Hispanic student population is approximately 44% if not more. The racist comments of an elected school board member over the majority minority student population of your district should have been condemned by the superintendent and entire board. The only group associated with your district that had the courage to speak the truth of these comments was your EDAC committee which is comprised of community members.

Ms. Patricca furthered her hatred for Guatemalans when she was interviewed by Wink News where she responded to the question of how she felt over petitions and the outrage over her comments and Ms. Patricca told Wink Reporter Breana Ross “This stuff does not take up any space in my brain.”

There is no “space” in our community for an individual like Ms. Patricca in maintaining her seat as a school board member. As I have reviewed other videos of Ms. Patricca’s conduct and behavior on this board she has shown an ongoing pattern of hatred, biases and racism throughout her term on this board.

In the areas of where you have the highest rate of Hispanic students those students are in environments of high rates of violence in their schools, overcrowding, lack of certified staff and low achievement rates. While Ms. Patricca’s district in Estero is comprised of 93% white it has the highest achievement rates and does not have the amount of students in trailers as does district 5 which has one of your largest Hispanic student population.

Rather than advocating for these students, Ms. Patricca has chosen to perpetuate stereotypes and hatred in her reference to Guatemalan students and all Hispanic students by portraying them as uncivilized and ignorant.

We need a Latino representative in the School Board, our Latino Student community has grown so much in the past 10 years, that it is time to have a Latino/Latina Representative in The School District! The Time is NOW!!

Ms. Patricca must resign. We will accept no other response.

Respectfully Yours,

**Mario E. Juarez**  
CEO-President  
Guatemala US-FL Chamber of Commerce