

VIA EMAIL (potapoff@lesd.k12.az.us)

September 15, 2021

Sandra J. Creta

Avondale, AZ 85392

Litchfield Elementary School District

Attn: Amy Potapoff

272 E. Sagebrush Street

Litchfield Park, AZ 85340

Re: Interim Board Seat

Dear Sir or Madam:

This letter is to express my interest in being appointed to the interim board position on the Litchfield Elementary School District Governing Board. I have two children who attend school within LESD—a middle school student and an elementary school student. My family has been part of the District since 2014. I own a business within the boundaries of LESD. Also, I am and have been a volunteer for the district in several capacities: a) Vice President of the Board for the Litchfield Elementary School District Education Foundation (2016-present); b) Vice President for the Rancho Santa Parent Teacher Association (20-21 school year); c) member of Rancho Santa Fe Parent Teacher Association (2014-present); and d) Rancho Santa Fe Elementary School site council member (2018-2020).

I am an Arizona native—I was born at Maryvale Hospital, went to school in the Cartwright Elementary School District, and graduated from Arizona State University. Except for three years of law school (I attended the University of Texas School of Law), I have lived in Arizona my entire life.

Both of my parents were teachers in Arizona. My father taught 7th grade Social Studies at Desert Sands Jr. High (Cartwright) and my mother taught Home Economics at South Mountain and North High Schools. As the daughter of teachers, I have a unique view into the challenges our teachers experience on a daily basis. Thirteen years ago, I became a parent, which added a new perspective on how I view education and my obligations to my community, which is why I am involved in the district.

I am also an attorney. I practiced for almost ten years in large law firms and opened my own firm (in Avondale) in 2009. My legal experience includes representing school districts, teachers, administrators, and parents. I have a general understanding of many of the laws facing school districts and Governing Boards, including the Open Meetings Law. I have presented at the Arizona School Board Association statewide conference (early 2000's) and I have also taught, in connection with two other attorneys, a graduate-level course on school law for administrators as an adjunct professor at Arizona State University. In 2016, I previously applied for an interim board seat within LESD and attended a full day of training for Arizona school board members, although I was ultimately not selected.

As a parent and as an attorney who has represented school boards, teachers, students, and administrators (not within LESD), and as the daughter of two teachers who taught in the State of Arizona, I am in a unique

position to step into an interim board seat. Given my background, if appointed, I will be able to participate and contribute immediately.

As the child of a single parent who grew up in Maryvale, I understand scarce resources. I attended college on scholarship and paid for law school myself. I have marched for school funding, written letters, and begged and pleaded with lawmakers for more funds for our schools. Resources, whether it is money, time, teachers, or facilities, need to be managed carefully. As I run a business, I understand budgets and the need to obtain maximum value from investments. My business and legal background will assist me in helping the District use its resources well and in asking questions about the purpose of expenditures to ensure we are getting the most value for our dollars.

Our District has set goals and priorities. We need to make sure that our District's goals align with community and student needs. To do that, we need community engagement, not just from the very involved parents at the wealthier schools in our district, but also from the parents of our Title I schools, where free time to volunteer and connect may be scarce. My volunteer work at the schools and service on site council has helped me connect with many families and parents within our district. We are firmly embedded in the community and as a board member, I would work hard to engage families in our schools, through outreach, showing up to district events, and being a presence in our schools when possible.

I work from home in Avondale—with advance notice, my schedule is usually flexible and I can attend District events. I live on the west side of our District and am frequently in at least two of our schools.

Our district has historically been a high-performing district compared to our districts in our state. This will not always be the case unless our district can adapt to our changing student population and their diverse educational needs. Not all students learn at the same pace or at the same level and I believe the District's mission (Mission Believe) is to get the best out of each individual student. I believe that if something isn't working (and we know this from test scores and anecdotes), we need to pivot and try something new, sooner rather than later. We need to be accountable for our decisions and expenditures and if something is not working, we need to own it and CHANGE rather than blame.

The main focus of my practice is employment law. I have been a practicing attorney in Arizona since 1997. My experience has taught me that quality employees and a good work environment will make or break an organization, whether it is a private company or a public school. Our District's greatest resource is our employees, and this resource needs to be tended carefully. We need to hire strategically and intentionally and we need to foster a work environment that will attract the best teachers our limited funds can afford. I have counseled companies and employers about strategic hiring, professional development, and business development. Although our district is a family, we are a business first, with the product being highly educated students who are prepared for high school.

In sum, my background would enable me to participate meaningfully as a Board member quickly. I know and love the District and am committed to this community. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sandra J. Creta, Esq. 