Dear Members of the Woodland Park Community:

We, the teachers and staff of Woodland Park, are writing because we are deeply concerned about the direction that Ken Witt and the current school board are taking our district and the effect that will have on the broader community. We feel that in the face of the current administration's attack on our students' learning environments, we can no longer stay silent. We must utilize our Constitutional rights to speak out against what we feel is incompetent leadership actively harming our students and community. It pains us to write this because we deeply love our students and the community of Woodland Park. But it has become abundantly clear to us that the direction that Ken Witt and the school board are taking our schools is unsustainable and detrimental to our students and our greater community.

Right now, the students at Woodland Park schools are missing out on the quality education of their predecessors. This is a direct result of dangerous decisions like refusing funding for mental health support, implementing the American Birthright Standards, and leaving parents and teachers out of these crucial decisions of the current elected school board and superintendent. We lost close to 40% of our teachers and staff last year. It is our students who are suffering the most because of that loss. Our students have lost decades of institutional knowledge that only years of direct pedagogical instruction can replicate. We regret the circumstances are such that these respected and valued teachers and staff saw no choice but to leave the classrooms and schools they loved.

In addition to the loss of institutional knowledge, we’re deeply concerned about the adoption of the American Birthright Standards. We believe that our job as educators is to prepare our students for the future. These state-rejected social studies standards are putting our kids’ futures at risk. Many social studies courses that our students took in the past are no longer NCAA accredited due to the change in standards. This means when our students want to register to be eligible to play college sports, they can no longer count these unaccredited classes towards those requirements. We need to ensure that our students are college-ready, if they choose to pursue that path, and the American Birthright Standards do not measure up to the rigorous academic standards that Woodland Park has prided itself on in the past.

Preparing our students for success also means ensuring that their social and emotional needs are being met, and right now, the mental health support in our schools is woefully inadequate to meet the current demand. The School Board chose not to renew $1.2 million in grant funding which had previously been used to support student mental health services. This resulted in the reduction of 15 mental health positions, such as school counselors. We strongly believe that mental health is integral to academic success and that students must be treated as the developing young minds that they are. Cutting funding for mental health support in our schools when students are facing a variety of challenges and changes both at home and in school was entirely the wrong decision to make. This cut is both short sighted and dangerous. Our community is stronger and safer when our students have adequate mental health support.
Finally, as teachers and staff in Woodland Park, we feel that we cannot continue to work under the current culture of fear and silence created by the school board. We are concerned that, eventually, the current district administration will drive everyone away, and the ones who will suffer the most are our students and our community at large.

As teachers, staff, and members of this community, we stand together, knowing that we might face illegal repercussions for this letter. However, standing up for our students’ futures depends on taking action now. As teachers, parents, and members of this community, our voices cannot be silenced any longer. We implore you, the members of our beloved community, to call on the current school board to reinstate state-approved social studies standards, to reapply for the grant funding that is allocated towards mental health support in our schools, and to prioritize our children’s futures over politics.

Sincerely,
Woodland Park Teachers and Staff

2. Nicole Vergenz 17. Stefanie Rohman 32. Michelle Manning
5. Anna Hand 20. Kelly Schmidt 35. Teresa Davies
7. Eric Aragon 22. Lindsay Orellana 37. Heather Macari
10. Mike Schoudel 25. Malgozata Drews 40. Monika Fraser
12. Lisa Harding 27. Blaine Miller 42. Cynthia Ingram
47. Shellie Lasiter-Read 58. Lynn Zupans 70. Selene Hernandez
49. Michelle Studwell 60. Beth Woods 72. Asa Ansong
50. Lee Anne Friedrich 61. Connie Knowles 73. Shania Myers
52. Margaret Rudin 63. Kristi Hensley 75. Jill Connolly
53. Samantha Ware 64. Anne Gatlin 76. Wanda Bingham
54. Leslie Shaw 65. Jayne Bourdon 77. Lauren Richardson
56. Holly Torres 67. Mary Crade 79. Rene Wisniewski
57. Trecia Garrick 68. Ann Cummings 80. Alana Purling
58. Olivier Read 69. Alexis Hansford 81. Victoria Wallace