

## STATEMENT FROM MAYOR ELLEN ZOPPO-SASSU

Earlier this month, First Student buses were vandalized while parked at Chippens Hill Middle School and West Bristol. A Police investigation was started at that time. Recently, rumors have started to circulate concerning the involvement of one of my children. It is my belief that whisper campaigns often occur in the absence of truth and facts, as is the case with this situation. I have decided to make a statement in order to ensure that people are confident in my commitment to accountability and transparency.

Here's what I know – my son was at a birthday party on the evening of June 6<sup>th</sup> where he slept over. The parents collected keys, and also have security camera footage which has confirmed that my son was there all night. The camera footage also shows the time of when he and others left the home on Sunday morning. At some point during the party, some of them saw a “Snapchat” image of the buses with writing on them. So that morning, some of the boys decided to go check it out, and told my son where they were going. He decided to go too. While the boys were walking around the buses and looking at what was written on them, a dog walker called the Police to say there were kids hanging around the buses. She also took down their license plates.

At that point, the vandalism had yet to be reported, so an investigation commenced. The boys who were there that morning acknowledge that they used poor judgement in going to look at the vandalism and await the opportunity to tell their story to investigators.

In my role as Mayor, and as a parent, I find the effort by certain groups to use my child and this particular incident for political purposes to be extremely distasteful. In order to ensure the highest level of integrity, I have urged that this investigation be removed from the Bristol Police Department and given to the Chief State's Attorney office to ensure that it is conducted independently. I am confident that having the investigation transferred to an outside agency is the best action to take.

It is and always will be my policy to take a hands off approach with respect to on-going criminal investigations. One of the earliest basic tenets of understanding between Chief Gould and myself is non-interference in criminal investigations by my Administration. In no way would there ever be any engagement or discussion between the Police Chief and myself, contrary to what has been presented on social media.

There have been many positive conversations this past month about diversity, equity and inclusion, which have brought out the best in our community. I have zero tolerance for any incidents of property defacement with messages aimed at certain segments of our community. More change is needed and I am committed to ensuring that happens.