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Dear Karen,

In January, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) compliance coordinator Khalid Walker found “stone cold sexual harassment” during an internal investigation of Farquhar Middle School Principal Joel Beidleman. Yet, he told MoCo360 he was ordered to reverse his findings—and alleged that MCPS retaliated.

Walker told MoCo360 freelance reporter Alexandra Robbins that after he refused to rewrite his report outlining Beidleman’s misconduct following his promotion to principal of Paint Branch High School, he was ordered to turn in his MCPS-issued laptop. When he refused for fear of tampering, MCPS locked him out of the district computer systems and transferred him to a different human resources role, a demotion.

When Alexandra reached out to MCPS spokesperson Chris Cram for comment, he declined. Instead, he referred her to the Inspector General’s report released Nov. 29, which didn’t answer even one of MoCo360’s questions. Yet, this story needed to be told and Alexandra’s in-depth reporting was just beginning.

She interviewed nine educators who left Farquhar in June due to Beidleman’s misconduct, some of whom spoke anonymously due to fear of retaliation. She also interviewed Walker directly, shedding light on this important situation. On Jan. 22, Alexandra reported that then-MCPS Superintendent Monifa McKnight decried Beidleman’s “years of disturbing and egregious behavior” in a Dec. 1 statement to MCPS employees. But MoCo360’s investigation found that “this issue” came to the district’s attention before the summer of 2023. Once McKnight was officially informed of it, she did not act, nor did she respond to MoCo360’s requests for comments, according to Alexandra’s reporting.

As Alexandra also reported, McKnight sent an email to staff stating that a

“multi-faceted background check” would be put in place when MCPS candidates are hired, a direct response to the Beidleman investigation. McKnight announced five interim appointees—four of them MCPS retirees—who would accompany her “Framework for Change.” Yet, what MoCo360 discovered is that at least one of those appointees was involved in Beidleman’s prior promotions and least one was the subject of complaints of workplace bullying.

When MCPS leaves out information, MoCo360 doubles down on our investigative reporting—and our coverage has continued, bringing you the details of McKnight’s eventual resignation and the County Council’s grilling of MCPS officials.

We will continue to bring you important coverage not only on this topic, but everything that’s newsworthy throughout our school system, holding our public officials to account and ensuring transparency. But we can’t do this vital work alone.

Will you support our local reporting by becoming a member today?

Yes, count me in!

With gratitude,



Julie Rasicot
Editor

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