FACT SHEET - Additional Information Regarding Issues Raised by MCFUSE

This fact sheet provides additional context regarding issues raised in MCFUSE's recent open letter to the Gallup-McKinley County Schools Board of Education. It is intended for community members who would like more detail about the matters referenced in Board President Kevin Mitchell's response.

Sawyer Masonjones Discharge and Arbitration

GMCS conducted public discharge hearings regarding former teacher and MCFUSE President Sawyer Masonjones. Because Mr. Masonjones exercised his right to request that the hearings be public, recordings of the two days of proceedings, including testimony and evidence presented, have been made publicly available by the District.

The Public Employees Labor Relations Board also considered allegations that the District's actions against Masonjones were motivated by anti-union bias. According to the Board President's review of that decision:

- The Superintendent presented sufficient evidence of misconduct and insubordination to establish just cause for discipline.
- MCFUSE did not establish that the District's actions were caused by Masonjones's union activities.

An independent arbitrator later reviewed the discharge. The arbitrator sustained findings involving misconduct and insubordination but determined that discharge was too severe a penalty. The findings referenced in the arbitrator's decision included concerns involving:

- instructional time
- student attendance and accountability
- monitoring students who left the classroom
- response to known student vaping
- student engagement
- instructional support

The arbitrator ordered a lesser remedy. GMCS disagrees with that portion of the decision and has elected to appeal the ruling to the New Mexico Court of Appeals.

New Discharge Proceeding

Superintendent Jvanna Hanks has initiated a new discharge action involving Masonjones following a separate review. Because that proceeding is ongoing and could ultimately come before the Board of Education, Board members must avoid prejudging the outcome.

Collective Bargaining

MCFUSE has raised concerns about the District's labor relationship and collective bargaining. GMCS's position is that the District has participated in bargaining and that disagreement over proposals or outcomes does not mean bargaining has not occurred. Superintendent Hanks has taken a more direct role in collective bargaining and communication with union leadership than her predecessor. The District's stated goal is to maintain a constructive working relationship while also considering its financial responsibilities and obligations to students and the broader community.

The Board's Responsibility

The Board of Education represents more than one organization or employee group. Board members are elected by the public and are responsible to:

- students
- parents and guardians
- employees
- taxpayers
- local and tribal communities served by GMCS

GMCS reports that more than 80 percent of the District's budget is devoted to employees, including compensation, benefits, programs and other support.

Superintendent Oversight

MCFUSE has questioned whether the Board is adequately supervising Superintendent Hanks. The District's response is that the Superintendent is the sole employee of the Board and remains subject to Board oversight and annual evaluation. According to Board President Mitchell, the Superintendent keeps the Board informed on matters affecting its governance responsibilities and seeks Board input on issues that involve both administrative and Board authority.

Stride and Open Meetings Act Issues

MCFUSE's letter also raises questions about the District's former dispute with Stride, the financial terms of the resulting settlement and findings issued by the New Mexico Department of Justice regarding the Board's May 16, 2025 meeting. MCFUSE has specifically requested additional public information concerning:

- the approximately $24 million payment referenced in the settlement
- the source of those funds
- the effect on District finances and reserves
- the effect on staffing, compensation and programs
- legal costs and remaining liabilities
- corrective actions following the Open Meetings Act findings

The materials provided for this fact sheet do not contain GMCS's substantive response to those specific financial and Stride-related questions. Those issues should be addressed separately with verified financial and legal information before additional statements are made.

A New Board and Superintendent

Three members of the Board referenced in MCFUSE's letter are no longer serving, and GMCS is now operating under a new superintendent. The current Board's stated goal is to move forward with a more community-focused and accessible approach while maintaining professional and safety standards for employees and keeping student needs at the center of District decisions.

Where to Find More Information

Community members who want to review the Masonjones matter in greater detail may consult the public hearing recordings and other records made available by GMCS. The District will continue to provide information on ongoing matters when legally and appropriately able to do so.