



DETECTIVES' ENDOWMENT ASSOCIATION, INC.

POLICE DEPARTMENT • CITY OF NEW YORK

26 THOMAS STREET • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10007

(212) 587-1000 • FAX (212) 732-4863

www.nycdetectives.org

EXECUTIVE BOARD

PAUL DIGIACOMO
President

PAUL E. MORRISON
Vice President

KEN SPARKS
Secretary

JEFFREY A. WARD
Treasurer

BRIAN HUNT
Borough Director
Manhattan/Bronx/Headquarters

FRANK CICCONE
Borough Director
Brooklyn/Queens/Staten Island

SCOTT MUNRO
Sergeant at Arms

JOHN J. COMER
Chairman, Board of Trustees

TRUSTEES

PATRICK J. DONOHUE
Headquarters

STEVEN NIEVES
Manhattan South

JOHN F. HOURICAN
Manhattan North

TONY CASILLA
Bronx

CHRISTOPHER J. SCHILLING
Brooklyn North

TIMOTHY O'BRIEN
Brooklyn South

JOHN J. COMER
Queens

GREGORY W. SILVERMAN
Staten Island

WELFARE OFFICERS

BRIAN P. MAGUIRE
Headquarters

ANTONIO ESPOSITO
Manhattan South

PATRICK K. PURCELL
Manhattan North

RICK SIMPLICIO
Bronx

JOSEPH R. TALLARINE
Brooklyn North

BRIAN MEYERS
Brooklyn South

NICHOLAS MASI
Queens

RAYMOND L. WITTICK
Staten Island

LOU MATARAZZO
Legislative Director

Dr. Cheryl Champ
Pelham Union Free School District
18 Franklin Place
Pelham, New York 10803

November 9, 2020

Dear Dr. Champ:

On Saturday, June 26, 1976, off-duty New York City Transit Police Detective George Caccavale was shot and killed during a robbery of the Van Dam Check Cashing Corporation in Long Island City. Det. Caccavale was working this second job at the check cashing facility to support his wife and two young children. The hold-up had been planned for weeks and the three perpetrators knew Caccavale was a Police Officer by the placard he kept in his car window. That knowledge did not deter them from stealing tens of thousands of dollars while gunning down Det. Caccavale in cold blood.

George Caccavale was a devoted husband, a loving father, and for eleven years an able young Transit Police Detective serving the citizens of New York City. The men who shot and killed him were later discovered to be members of the Black Liberation Army. They were caught and convicted, and sentenced to lengthy prison terms. But no amount of time in prison could ever bring Det. Caccavale back to his grieving family.

This year, the Caccavale family made commemorative sweatshirts to honor their father and grandfather, and donated the proceeds to police spouses and children of other slain Officers. Many members of your school district, including Pelham staff, bought the sweatshirts and wish to wear them. Your school district, at your direction, ordered the staff of the Pelham School District to stop wearing these sweatshirts, because, you wrote, they were "threatening in nature."

We are in receipt of, and are absolutely *outraged* by, your letters outlining your decision to ban any graphic or logo that honors the profession of policing or memorializes members of the service who have been killed *in the line of duty*. These are personal and deeply felt family memorials that you've somehow turned into "threatening political speech."



THE POLICE UNION REPRESENTING THE GREATEST DETECTIVES IN THE WORLD

AFFILIATIONS – NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE ORGANIZATIONS (NAPO)

NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF PBAs

At the same time, you've decided that the 1960s symbol of a "Black Power" fist is not political, and that listing the names of people who died during the commission of a crime, being questioned by police, or while resisting arrest isn't political, either, and are permissible to wear.

Your comment about the police flag being "perceived by students to be threatening in nature, causing them to feel unsafe within our schools," is shocking. Your claim has no more validity than to proclaim that a Norman Rockwell illustration of a Police Officer is "threatening" or that an American flag is "threatening." Your thought process is, in of itself, patronizing, ridiculous, demeaning, degrading, offensive, and flat out absurd. It is also grossly transparent.

For the record, you are not "protecting" students by perverting views about policing in America or turning your students into "cop-haters." Police enter into their profession to serve and protect the public, and the public desperately needs protecting. In 2019 alone, there were 417 mass shootings in the United States and many in schools; so many that even Amnesty International warned foreigners to take precautions when visiting this country. Many research sources estimate that three out of every four Americans are, or will become, the victim of a crime.

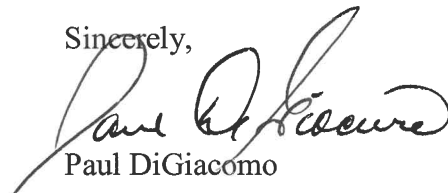
Sadly, as it is, Americans are loath to do anything about it and your attitude doesn't help. According to the Pew Research Center, the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistic's annual 2018 survey concluded that only 43% of violent crimes were reported to police, and only 34% of crimes against property were reported to police. Clearly, it's attitudes such as yours that instill fear of police in children, thus resulting in their victimization and the under-reporting of it, which leads to criminals getting away with, literally, murder. This will not bode well for any of your science classes in the "survival of the fittest."

Ms. Champ, there is no question that your ban of police flags would never be extended to any other profession, such as firefighter logos, or Teamster emblems, or any graphics that represents your own profession of teaching. How absurd to think that a police flag is a symbol of "terror." *And how dare you insinuate such!*

We are thankful for all the people in New York (and the world over) who respect and admire law enforcement, and it's evidenced in the books, movies, and television shows that highlight the incredible work of Officers and Detectives: from Sherlock Holmes to *Law & Order*. I sincerely doubt any of your students are "terrorized" by *Blue Bloods*, *Chicago P.D.*, or *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*. To imagine such is an insult to their intelligence and to ours, not to mention an insult to your School District's employees who wish to wear memorial sweatshirts.

We are currently having our lawyers review your edict as we believe you have grossly overstepped your bounds by your attempted censoring of personal wardrobe selection, especially since four of Det. Caccavale's grandchildren are students in your school district. While we understand you did not want 2020 political candidates' names on clothing during election time, lest it be construed as electioneering for a particular candidate (not that grade school children can vote, mind you), but to ban a sweatshirt bearing the name of an Officer killed in 1976 is an obscenity. Given your attitude, we're surprised you did not try to ban the mention of names from 1776, too. If you wish to discuss the matter further, I can be reached at my office at **(212) 587-1000**.

Sincerely,



Paul DiGiacomo
President

PDG/