

October 21, 2022

Dear MMSD Human Resources Department and Title IX Coordinator Sherrice Perry,

We, the undersigned present and past employees of the MMSD Communications Department, are filing a formal complaint against the Executive Director of Communications and Public Affairs, Tim LeMonds, due to years of consistent emotional abuse, bullying, unequal pay, and harassment on the basis of gender, and race or ethnicity. The following incidents violate Sections [2.2](#) and [2.8](#) of MMSD's Employee Handbook on bullying, and [Policy 8012](#) of the Board of Education's Policies & Procedures on Title IX.

We respectfully request a full review of the materials below, which up until now we have been too afraid to address to HR and MMSD administration due to a fear of additional retaliation by Mr. LeMonds. In full honesty, we are still afraid, but have reached a breaking point due to the toll our mental, emotional, and physical health have taken trying to address the issues ourselves. The consistent bullying, harassment, retaliation and incompetence—especially on women and a person of color in protected classes—has created a disrespectful, toxic work environment that inhibits the efficacy of the district's communications department, one that we're unable to fix ourselves no matter how hard we work. Given the facts in this document and the exit interviews of past employees documented by HR, we trust the department will uphold the standards put forth by the Employee Handbook and look forward to hearing your response.

Thank you very much for your mutual respect, consideration, and confidentiality on this matter.

Sincerely,

Ellie Herman, Communications Specialist

Brad Mackey, Communications Web Programmer

Mike Wetzal, Communications Media Producer/Director

Ryan Budziszewski, Former Bilingual Communications Specialist

Taryn Johnson, Former Communications Bilingual Project Specialist

Liz Merfeld, Former Communications Public Information Officer

Tony Rodriguez, Former Communications Web Team Leader

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Section 1: Timeline of examples of bullying and harassment from Tim. Includes links to evidence.

- **January 2019** Tim starts working at MMSD in Safety and Security. Eventually he takes over a communications leadership role during the transition between superintendents.
- **December 2020** Tim yells at and ridicules 3 communications staff members, two women and a man of color, over a letter that went out to MMSD families. In the end, the error was due to a mistake Tim made. The abuse in this specific meeting left the supervisor speechless.
- **December 2020** Ryan B, an employee of color, was disciplined by Tim because of a kind, morale-boosting email Ryan sent to the department staff as they pushed through to the holiday season. Ryan was told he was “wrong, had overstepped, and wasn’t respecting authority and was undermining leadership,” for sharing compliments with staff. Tim told Ryan that even mentioning mental health was “inappropriate.” Tim then indirectly threatened Ryan’s job just for sending this positivity email.
- **March 2021** Former employee Taryn Johnson, who worked for the district for over 9 years, resigns and notes Tim’s behavior is a factor in her exit interview
- **November 2021** Tim delays plan to have a communications specialist at each high school. Asks Ellie H. to oversee two high school attendance areas instead of one, doubling her workload. Ellie H. was told this was temporary, until new employees could be hired in the New Year.
- **November 2021** Former employee Tony Rodriguez, who worked for the district for over 9 years, resigns and notes a large factor was due to Tim.
- **December 2021** Ellie H. hears Tim speak disparagingly about another coworker, Liz M. saying she is “lazy” and “bad at doing her job.”
- **December 2021** Former employee Ryan Budziszewski, who worked for the district for almost 5 years, resigns and notes Tim’s behavior is a factor in his exit interview
- **January 2022** Tim tells Ellie on Zoom that she would receive a pay increase to match standard market rate
- **Feb. 3, 2022** Ellie H. was informed by Tim she would receive a salary increase and take on a senior communications title.
- **Feb. 4, 2022** Tim pressured Brad about taking a non-union position without seeing any information about what this new job would entail. Following this meeting Tim called Brad's supervisor (Amy Knight) to inform her that he was talking bad about her in the meeting. This was not true and can be corroborated by Mike Wetzelski who was also in this meeting with Tim and Brad. *(An audio recording exists of this meeting)*
- **March 2, 2022** Ellie H. receives her first verbally abusive phone call from Tim, in which he yells at her on the phone for 45 minutes, in response to her statement that crisis communications could have been handled better if school staff and Ellie had more autonomy in sending out messages without excessive oversight from Tim. On the call, Tim screams at Ellie: *“You have no idea how to handle your job...I may need to rethink your role, because you are too emotional.”* Please note, Ellie stayed calm while Tim screamed at her. Tim continued to yell *“I am the executive director of communications, that means what I say, goes, and you have to do it.”* He continues to tell Ellie she has no experience and needs immediate training on crisis communications, despite

being fully qualified and experienced. At the end of the call, Ellie hears the voice of communications coworker Jodi Fiedler on the call. Ellie learned at that moment she had been on speaker the entire time, with Jodi F. present. Ellie did not know a) she was on speaker or b) that Jodi was in the room. Jodi claims Tim announced it at the beginning. Jodi never intervened or spoke against Tim's abusive bullying.

- Witnesses: After the call, Ellie called her supervisor Amy Knight and told her about the situation. She then ran into Memorial AP Suzanne Blackamore, who Ellie confided in, crying about the call.
- **March 2, 2022** On a conference call with Memorial SBLT and Ellie, Tim shared that he bullied the City of Madison Police Department's Public Information Officer (PIO), Stephanie Fryer. He told SBLT staff and Ellie "I became unglued, and really railed into her, I mean full on yelling. She's an idiot. She clearly doesn't know what she's doing." Then proceeded to laugh.
 - Witnesses: Memorial Principal Matt Hendrickson and AP Suzanne Blackamore
- **March 3, 2022** Tim criticized Liz Merfeld for not helping out with Memorial's fake bomb threat situation, despite the fact that she was out of the office, on vacation. When she pointed this out, his response was something to the effect of, "well still." Again, she was not being paid to work those days or reachable by phone or email.
- **March 28, 2022** Tim tells Ellie H. she will get her pay increase "soon." On that [phone call](#), Ellie requests back pay for the attendance area/workload being doubled from the position she was contracted to work, without compensation. Tim says he will ask HR, but says "they are so slow," that it may take awhile.
- **April 25, 2022** During a Zoom meeting, Tim describes local NBC 15 journalist Elizabeth Wadas as: *"Quickly becoming the sleaziest journalist in Madison...What a pig of a journalist."* He then speaks of a West HS football coach as: *"Coach Sweet is one of the grossest people I've met in my entire life...Everything that comes out of his mouth is bullshit."*
- **May 2022** During a conversation about safety and crisis communication with Tim, Liz Merfeld was sharing how some of the things she has been learning in grad school (she is graduating in May 2023 with a Master's Degree in Emergency Management), and Tim replied, "You can have some letters after your name, but nothing compares to real-world experience." Liz took offense to this comment, and to the time, energy, money, and dedication she has poured into her graduate studies over the past two years. She corrected him and informed him that she is not in school to have letters after her name but to learn.
- **May 13, 2022** Ellie H. [emails](#) HR asking for an update on the payroll increase. On the same day, HR responds saying they have no record of Tim requesting a raise or backpay.
- **May 26, 2022** HR confirms Tim will have to reach out to HR to formally request fair pay for Ellie H, since he hadn't yet, despite previously claiming he did. On the same day, Ellie discusses this with her direct supervisor, Amy K., who offers to speak to Tim on this matter, and ensure Ellie gets fair pay.
- **June 1, 2022** Tim [texts](#) Amy K. to tell her he is "both surprised and frankly disturbed," that Ellie H. would follow up with HR without coming to him first. Ellie had already discussed this pay increase with Tim 3 times. It was Tim's suggestion Ellie receive a raise in the first place. Tim writes that Amy needs to tell Ellie to "be patient," and wait until MTI teacher/SEA wages are

settled. There has been no discussion of a pay raise or back pay since, and Ellie is scared to inquire for fear of further backlash.

- **June 2, 2022** Amy calls Ellie to update her further on Tim's stance about Ellie's raise. Amy shares that Tim said: he wanted to wait until the base wage pay MTI called for is settled over the summer. He can't talk to HR because if anyone in HR is in MTI, they might get mad that other Doyle employees are getting additional money. He tells Amy to tell Ellie to "be cool." Amy agrees with Ellie on the call that it's unacceptable for Tim to restrict pay for Ellie this long. There is a recording of this call if needed.
- **June 2022** During Liz Merfeld's most recent (and only) performance review, Tim indicated there is room for improvement in supervising Ellie Herman. Yet that was not part of her job description, as the many department reorganizations that Tim proposed were never enacted, so Liz was never Ellie's supervisor. Expectations for Liz's performance review were never set, formally or informally. How could Liz be deficient in a responsibility not assigned to her?
- **July 2022** Communications PIO Liz Merfeld resigns from the communications department for another role in MMSD.
- **July and August 2022** Tim begins interviewing additional communications employees to fill vacancies. Some of the potentially future direct coworkers and subordinates of these interviewees were never consulted, or invited to discuss the candidates. In July, Tim posted Amy Knight's exact job role on an internet employment board without telling her. As of August 29, Tim said he doesn't know what role he would have the 2 interviewees take, despite offering them roles.
- **Aug. 4, 2022** During a department retreat, Tim and Jodi tell the entire comms staff that while in Chicago for a conference, they went to a Chicago Cubs game with staff from "Let's Talk," a paid vendor MMSD uses. The company purchased box seats for the game, and it appears that Tim and Jodi accepted these free tickets, in direct violation of [District Policy](#). There is a recording, transcript, and social media evidence of this [here](#).
- **Aug. 8, 2022** Superintendent Dr. Jenkins begins a series of interviews with national news sources discussing the teacher shortage. During the first interview, live on CNN via video call, Tim refused to allow Communications Manager Amy Knight or video producer Mike Wetzel to be a part of the video set up, despite it being their role to support video/light/audio production for district events. A district leader noted the poor video quality. Nevertheless, Amy nor Mike were allowed to attend future nationwide interviews despite asking to assist.
- **Aug. 10 2022** Tim yells at Amy for letting two staff members, Ellie Herman and Mike Wetzel, take one day off in the month of August. Tim tells her this is not allowed, that staff should not take time off in August. Tim allowed Jodi to take a 3-work day vacation off the same week. Ellie had to take the day off for a funeral. Mike was taking the day off to help his son move to take a job as music teacher in the East Troy School District.
- **Aug. 16, 2022** Amy K. calls Ellie H. to tell her Tim has requested she demote herself for a lower-paying job in a completely different role in Marketing, and accept less pay than advertised for the position, so he could instead hire 2 men. Tim had asked Amy what she thinks of Ellie as an employee, and Amy shared a very positive review. Tim responded "Huh, I think she's annoying."

- **Aug. 16, 2022** On the same call between Amy K. and Ellie H., Amy shares that Tim told her she is “bad” at her job, and that if MMSD doesn’t fill its ~150 teaching vacancies, that it is solely *her* fault, because her marketing skills are so ineffective.
- **Aug. 18, 2022** Tim calls Amy to suggest another department rearrangement. He suggests Amy not have a full time employee, but instead a part-time LTE, after repeated claims that she is a “poor manager who doesn’t have control of her staff.” Tim tells her the reasons many employees have quit over the years is because of her. Exit interviews and statements from former employees listed below prove that Tim was a main reason they left their roles.
- **Aug. 19, 2022** A significant design decision was made about the district website and Brad was not consulted or asked for his feedback on the upcoming change. When informed of the upcoming change in a morning meeting, Brad lashed out calling the change “Stupid” (*admittedly unwarranted behavior*). Brad later apologized to everyone in the meeting individually and blamed his frustrations on being excluded from the discussion in the first place. This is an ongoing example of “excluding a person that would normally be expected to attend from meetings,” section of bullying.
- **Aug. 24, 2022** Tim tells Amy K. “*I fucking hate Beth Beyer,*” speaking of the Wisconsin State Journal K-12 education journalist.
- **Aug. 30, 2022** Tim tells a female journalist [she is not allowed to go inside of schools](#) on the First Day of School, claiming it’s a blanket rule for all reporters. However on the first day, a male journalist from the Capital Times Newspaper and a photographer were [granted full access](#) to interview and photograph students in the classroom. The male journalist said he was never told by Tim he wouldn’t be allowed inside classrooms.
- **Aug. 31, 2022** Communications employee Liz Merfeld’s last day in the department, after resigning, in part due to Tim’s behavior and treatment.
- **Sept. 1, 2022** Ellie Herman is now expected to cover all communications for all 52 schools in the district. Tim claims he will offer jobs to interviewees, which would still be a 2+ week delay plus weeks of onboarding before she has assistance. When Ellie shared her worries that there are not enough staff to cover all schools, Tim sternly replied in a group Zoom that he does not “see what the problem is, you just need to work harder.”
- **Sept. 2, 2022** Tim withholds information from Amy on which schools Dr. Jenkins and other officials will be visiting for the first day of school. He doesn’t respond to her texts, calls, or emails when she asks for locations, despite being expected to be there. It is thought this was a maneuver to intentionally exclude her, making her lack of presence look bad to district leaders.
- **Sept. 5, 2022** Amy receives an abusive email from Tim on Labor Day, ironically a day staff nationwide have off. Deputy Associate Superintendent of Elementary Schools Chelsey Tubbs and Jodi Fiedler are CCd on the email.
- **Sept. 6, 2022** Tim continues to not respond to any of Amy’s calls, texts, or emails. He literally pretends Amy doesn’t exist when seeing her in person in the Communications Office, and stands in front of her door to block her from existing and greeting a new staff member. She says “excuse me,” multiple times to Tim, who refuses to move or look at her.
- **Sept. 6, 2022** New employee Marti finds the new several-thousand dollar camera Tim purchased without consulting other department staff members is very difficult and unnecessary to use. She

insists a DSLR or iPhone camera would be sufficient. Tim claims it's too late to return the camera. The department is now on a strict, very limited budget because Tim refused to accept or listen to staff members' suggestions prior to purchasing.

- **Sept. 9, 2022** Amy learns in passing from another employee Tim has officially hired 2 new male employees, but he does not share this with any staff besides Jodi. Amy learns one of the male hires will have the same role as Ellie Herman, but will be receiving a higher salary. Ellie has been continually fighting for fair pay that Tim told her she would receive since Fall 2021. Ellie was bullied by Tim the last time she asked for fair pay in June 2022.
- **Sept. 12, 2022** Ellie and Tim are both sent an email from a journalist requesting a statement for a story. After Tim doesn't respond for hours, Ellie "replies all" to share that she isn't able to provide comment as she doesn't work at Doyle, but that Tim may be able to. Ellie has worked professionally in media relations for years, and told previously by Tim that it is part of her role to work with media. However after Ellie's benign response, [Tim sends her this email, telling her all media requests for the entire district must go through him.](#) However this results in reporters never or very delayed getting a response.
- **Sept. 15, 2022** NBC-15 publishes an article entitled "[Open Records Roadblock: MMSD takes over 6 months to reply to NBC15 Investigates open records request.](#)" detailing the consistent delay in receiving a request they must legally fulfill. While staff shortages may play a role, it is still illegal to not reply to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
 - CapTimes journalist retweets the article on Twitter adding "*I've had much the same experience as what's detailed in this article from NBC-15. With one four-month-old request, the district received my payment in June for what they estimated was two hours of work...still haven't gotten the records: Covering the district closely, I know there are significant budgetary and staff time trade-offs right now to focusing on open records, so I've tried to be understanding. But it's frustrating and takes away from the timeliness with which the public can understand issues. As with [this story](#), which was timely when requested in January, and not at all when received in August (just a week under seven months to fulfill).*"
- **Sept. 19, 2022** Amy was scheduled to attend a Zoom meeting for communications department management, but the meeting was canceled by Tim and deleted from the Google Calendar. Minutes later, Amy walked out into the main communications office, where she saw Tim and Jodi were conducting the meeting in person, with the rest of the department management, but she was not invited. This is an ongoing example of "excluding a person that would normally be expected to attend from meetings," section of bullying.
- **Oct. 3, 2022** During an all-staff meeting, Tim shares in front of everyone that Amy will no longer be managing, or have any influence over, MMSD social media or its website, despite it being the two largest aspects of her role. It is unclear to everyone what, if any, work is left for Amy. Ellie learns that Amy did not know she was essentially being demoted before being told in front of everyone, as Tim did not meet with her prior.
- **Oct. 6, 2022** Tim asks the entire communications department to go around the room and say all the negative interactions they have had with former K-12 education journalist Beth Beyer. Ellie

had only had positive experiences working with Beth Beyer, and attempted to defend her when Tim said:

- *“This [Beth Beyers] is a horrible human being. I mean, you can judge her as you will, but I’ve had experiences with her...I basically told her editors we want her removed, I never want to work with her ever again. The bosses said we need to meet and mend our relationship, well, to me that was enough. I’m like, ‘screw her.’ And uh, that’s why Beth Beyers is gone, because we just weren’t working with her.”*
- *“Unfortunately the new person, a woman, her replacement, isn’t any better. They have something out for our school district.”*

Tim dismissed Ellie’s comments when she explained Beth Beyers left her role to pursue a fellowship position in Washington D.C., and said “no, she left because I steamrolled her out.”

- **Oct. 6, 2022** Tim tells Ellie she will be expanding her role to cover even more media relations, by pitching stories to journalists weekly and coordinating and attending all interactions between media and MMSD staff. This is another example of Ellie having even more job responsibilities, but not being paid accordingly, especially compared to her male counterparts.
- **Oct. 20, 2022** Ellie learns via Tim that new Communications Manager Jared K. has quit after 31 days on the job, citing Tim as the reason for his departure.

Section 2: Overview of Official Complaint

Below are thematic summaries of the bullying and harassment department staff have experienced from Tim LeMonds, and the demonstrated ineptitude in his role. Section 1.2 summarizes the bullying and harassment local journalists have experienced from Tim LeMonds, and his antagonization of the press. Please note: It has been made clear to us that Communications employee Jodi Fiedler is compliant, and potentially encouraging, Tim’s behavior toward us (ex: timeline item dated March 2). As such, we did not feel comfortable sharing this complaint with her, and fear that if she is aware of this complaint, she will share it with Tim, resulting in more abuse against us.

Section 2.1

While nearly every single past and present communications employee has experienced intense bullying from Tim, it is clear that female employees (and journalists) *and* former employee Ryan B, who is a man of color, receive(d) the vast majority of the abuse. Tim’s screaming and lecturing occurs only to female staff members and Ryan B., details of which are included in employee statements below and the timeline above. Not only are women targeted more often and routinely, but the actions and words themselves are insults traditionally used to belittle women—phrases like “you’re so sensitive,” or “you’re too emotional.” Also, exclusively female employees and a male employee of color have had their jobs threatened by Tim. As defined in [Section 2.8](#) of the Employee Handbook, any employee who engages in harassment will be disciplined as appropriate. Tim’s continued mistreatment of women—including his continued unequal pay to female employee Ellie H.; attempts at demotion of Amy K. and Ellie H., and verbal and emotional abuse on the basis of sex—violates not only MMSD’s harassment policy, but Title IX. Tim’s patterned abuse toward an employee of color also violates Section 2.8, as his conduct

toward a protected group created an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment and adversely affected Ryan B.'s employment status.

Beyond the personal and professional toll Tim's actions have had on department staff and community partners, his behavior also harms the overall goal and effectiveness of the Communication Department, as exemplified by the high rate of employee turnover and consistent department understaffing. This undoubtedly brings financial harm on the district as well, as the Society for Human Resource Management notes onboarding alone costs the organization 16-20% of one employee's salary.

This has resulted in multiple department "redesigns," wherein every few months, Tim proposes a new hierarchy of department staff. The many iterations leave staff confused as to who their managers are or what their role is, and allows room for projects to slip through the cracks. Most recently, Tim announced a department redesign at a department retreat in August 2022—by the end of the month, he told staff on Zoom he was going to extend offers to two new male employees, but "isn't sure where they would go," and to expect additional changes. In the past 12 months, Tim has proposed upward of 4 department redesigns. Including one such plan that surplused Mike Wetzel's position before this plan was abandoned for another plan and Mike's position was reinstated into communications.

While increased workloads and smaller staffs occurred globally during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been excessive and unnecessary in the communications department. Communications Manager Amy Knight has worked every weekend, all late nights and early mornings for years, but is still told by Tim to "really step it up," because it's an "all hands on deck," scenario. Communications specialist Ellie Herman regularly clocked 60 hour work weeks last school year when covering 2x the number of schools she was hired for, just months earlier. Now she is told to cover all 52 schools, despite being paid for her original attendance area of 1 high school feeder pattern.

The combination of bullying/harassment and ineptitude at both managing a department *and* working with the press speak to Tim LeMond's inability to fulfill in his role. When making large department decisions, such as purchasing equipment worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, Tim refused to allow the inclusion, or even suggestions, from department staff, despite having staff who are experts in the field. This has resulted in the communications budget being almost entirely used up for the 2022-23 school year.

Section 2.2

The role of a media relations or public affairs director is working directly alongside reporters and media outlets, to inform the public of an organization's mission, policies and practices in a positive, consistent and credible manner. However these crucial relationships are deteriorating at MMSD, due to [Tim's consistent villainization of the press](#). *[Note, the linked document provides multiple examples of this bullying]*

It sets a precedent that our local journalists are not to be trusted on *any* topic, fomenting distrust in an already volatile, “fake news,” era. More specifically to MMSD, Tim’s offensive and dismissive treatment of Madison-area journalists, **especially female journalists**, dissolves the district’s ability to communicate broadly with the community. Tim repeatedly and directly tells the MMSD community, including the Superintendent’s Office and Board of Education, that our local news media are aggressive and unscrupulous (see timeline above). This is not true for many reasons—just Googling “Madison school district news” will bring up thousands of “positive” student stories. As noted in the timeline above and summary below, several news outlets have reported little to no response from Tim on multiple story requests, even for “happy” stories. Without a response from MMSD, journalists cannot write the story. Tim then blames the media for not writing “happy” stories, even though he never responded to their interview requests. He also insists only he is allowed to work with the media, and does not let Ellie, who is trained, assist. Additionally, as detailed in the timeline, local news stations are publishing articles about the lack of transparency and 6+ month delays in receiving FOIA requests. The district, and head of communications, is in charge of ensuring this is completed as public institutions are legally required to do so.

Three separate Madison news organizations told Ellie H. that Tim is not meeting the basic skills and traits that are absolutely crucial to the role of a communications and media relations director. All three news outlets agreed it’s due to his:

- Complete ignoring of press requests via email and phone, despite repeated follow ups
- Abrasive, vengeful phone calls and messages to reporters when they work with another MMSD communications staff member, who’s allowed to work with the news media
- Severe harassment via email and phone calls when to journalists when Tim thinks a story shows “too much negative,” about MMSD, when in fact, the journalists are doing their jobs to tell both sides of the story, and hold public institutions accountable
- **Female journalists have shared how their treatment by Tim is incredibly more severe than that of their male colleagues.**
 - One shared that Tim regularly called her late on Friday and weekend nights (outside of working hours) to “scream and yell,” about how terrible of a journalist she was, and that she was an incompetent reporter.
 - As noted in the timeline, Tim told Amy Knight on Aug. 24, 2022: “I fucking hate Beth Beyer,” a former K-12 education journalist at the Wisconsin State Journal
 - A female journalist has consistently, and intentionally, been denied access and opportunities granted automatically to other journalists. An example of this is listed on the timeline on August 30.
 - Tim asked the entire communications department on Oct. 6 to go around the room and say all the negative interactions they have had with former K-12 education journalist Beth Beyer

- Another female journalist has also received harassment by Tim, when he said she was “Quickly becoming the sleaziest journalist in Madison...What a pig of a journalist.” This is listed on the timeline on April 25.
 - Tim also told the entire communications department, that this journalist, who is a woman of color, that there is “no way” he would respond to her 3 interview requests because he “doesn’t like her.”

Section 3: Former Employees Official Statements

The following former employees previously resigned from their roles, in large part due to Tim’s mistreatment, and discrimination on the basis of sex and race and/or ethnicity.

1. Ryan Budziszewski, Former Bilingual Communications Specialist
 - a. **Forms of bullying witnessed/experienced by Tim, as defined by the MMSD handbook:** Provocative or dehumanizing name calling; Belittling a person in public or in private; Excluding a person that would normally be expected to attend from meetings, trainings, or other work-related events; Shouting at a person in private or in public; Using vulgar language or inappropriate language towards a person; Unwarranted or invalid criticism; Excessive monitoring of a person’s work
 - b. **Have you experienced OR witnessed "loud, disruptive, profane or obscene language or gestures that are clearly not part of the typical school district learning environment," by Tim? Yes**
 - c. **Comments:** “In December of 2020, T.L. had addressed our group for “our” failings in a communications message that went out to families, I believe. We later found out that the blame actually laid with T.L. and his failure of leadership and inability to communicate with his own team. Myself, and other colleagues were addressed in a manner the next morning that was very obviously not only rude, but abusive behavior. **We were yelled at and ridiculed virtually in a meeting in a manner that only a toxic white male addresses those who that person has little to no respect for. In this case, myself - a man of color, and two of my female colleagues.** The ridicule and yelling in this specific meeting left our supervisor speechless, because of the abusive nature of how we were addressed. This incident led me to ask myself if this was workplace abuse, and nearly everyone on the team individually assured me that it was. As in many abusive encounters, I asked myself if I was unworthy and incapable of working in this environment, and blamed myself. I lost self esteem during the months to follow and found myself struggling to keep pace due to the workplace environment and management from T.L.

Following this incident, our group was lacking general motivation and a sense of belonging, something that we had for years before T.L. had acquired his position. Because of this, I had written an uplifting email to our team, stating how much I appreciate the group and how wonderful it’s been working with everyone over the years problem free. This email was professional and I stated that I don’t like seeing coworkers hurt or belittled, the importance of honoring everyone’s mental health, and that I was

appreciative of everyone on the team. This email was well received by everyone on our team, minus T.L., who I had included as well. It was a necessary internal communication because everyone was still in a state of shock, working in fear, and operating with low morale.

Following this email, and an upcoming meeting where I reiterated the importance of operating with dignity and respect for all team members, I was called into a meeting with T.L. And my supervisor. In this meeting, the week before the 20/21 holiday break, I was told I was in the wrong, had overstepped, and wasn't respecting authority and was undermining leadership. After being gaslit nearly the entire meeting, none of my or my colleagues' concerns were addressed, and **I was told that even mentioning mental health in internal communication is inappropriate** and I should seek counseling and resources—which I already had been at the time. At the end of the meeting, T.L. had told me that he was “trying his best to keep everyone on the team “ in the coming months. Regardless of budget abilities, I considered this to be beyond rude and interpreted this to be **a direct threat to my employment and to my wellbeing as a person working for MMSD**. This meeting occurred right before the Christmas weekend, and for the entire holiday season, I had declined in health and well-being, to say the least... due to operating out of fear and being reprimanded for professionally speaking my mind and sticking up for others on our team.

Overall, this experience, and other personal and others' experience were the reason I left MMSD. **White male toxicity was ruling unchecked and it was time to get out of a toxic and abusive work environment**. In the months following this incident, Mike Wetzel had been “fired” by Tim, even though it was not cleared with MTI nor HR. So in that case, T.L. attempted to fire one of us, which In that moment I knew that his previous threats towards myself could very much turn into reality. Mike Wetzel was therefore not fired, due to there being no just reason or legitimately to what T.L.s intentions were.

In the coming months during 2021, 5 of us on the Communications team would leave MMSD: Marla P, Taryn J, Marlita B, myself, and Tony R, were those who had left due to T.L. and the work environment and toxic culture. **I truly believe T.L. not only misrepresents MMSD values, but contributes to toxic work culture and is antithetical to the progress that MMSD seeks for students, families, and staff.**

In my case, it was an honor to serve families, and I hope that MMSD better vets high end management and makes sure that there are not more like T.L. are hired. **It is bad for retaining staff of color, female staff, and anyone who may or may not face discrimination in society**. I hope MMSD makes the right choice going forward regarding the role and employment of T.L. This is the only time in my life that I've taken the time to write this out about a former employer, due to the serious nature of these claims. The

well-being of the Communications team and MMSD as a whole depends on HR making the right decision.”

2. Liz Merfeld, Former Communications Public Information Officer (PIO)
 - a. **Many of Liz’s instances of bullying are listed in the above timeline. An ongoing form of bullying she and Ellie Herman experienced occurred multiple times:** “There have been at least a few instances in which Tim has said to Amy something to the effect of, “I can’t reach Ellie? Where is she? I tried Liz too, and I can’t reach her.” Yet on these days, when I have been made aware of the fact that Tim said he had tried to reach me, I have no record of him calling, texting, or emailing me. Based on this, I have no conclusion to reach other than that he was lying and being manipulative.”
 - b. Tim criticized the physical appearance of former communications employee Liz Merfeld because she wore a sweatshirt with a hood while joining a Zoom meeting on her day off, out of office. However, he shared this criticism by gossiping with other coworkers, and told Liz “I heard everyone else was criticizing your outfit, they think you look really unprofessional.”
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3. Taryn Johnson, Former Communications Bilingual Project Specialist:
 - a. **When did you first observe or encounter workplace bullying from Tim?** “Pretty immediately. It didn’t take long for his true colors to show. He was immediately sexist and belittling to all the women in the department, demonstrating how little he cared about our opinions and how little he valued our work or contributions. He consistently demonstrated his belief that he is better than everyone else and we’re all idiots (this part is not gender-specific. He was equally demeaning to the men in the department). The work environment that he creates is toxic, unwelcoming and the opposite of what the district is trying to do (or at least says it’s trying to do). It’s clear Tim cares only about Tim. He should never be in charge of a team as he is the complete opposite of a team player. It took him over a year to learn how to pronounce my name and he knew nothing about me personally or even what I did at work, broadly in my role or in the every day. He never took any opportunity to care, or show up to meetings that he was scheduled for with the team, unless he wanted to yell at us, usually for something that wasn’t even our fault. But how would he know? He never paid attention. All he ever seemed to care about was sucking up to the superintendent and saving his own ass.” Taryn Johnson goes on to share Tim is “99% of the reason why I left the job I had for 9 years and had mostly enjoyed...Please fire him and stop paying him ridiculous sums of money to keep getting away with,” bullying coworkers.
 - b. **Forms of bullying witnessed/experienced by Tim, as defined by the MMSD handbook:** Belittling a person in public or in private; Excluding a person that would normally be expected to attend from meetings, trainings, or other work-related events; Shouting at a

person in private or in public; Using vulgar language or inappropriate language towards a person; Unwarranted or invalid criticism

- c. **Have you experienced OR witnessed "loud, disruptive, profane or obscene language or gestures that are clearly not part of the typical school district learning environment," by Tim?** Yes
- d. **Do you feel the supervisor's behavior has inhibited the department's ability to properly function?** Yes
- e. **Was Tim's behavior a factor in your resignation from MMSD?** Yes
- f. **Did you mention Tim's behavior in your exit interview with MMSD?** Yes

4. Tony Rodriguez, Former Communications Web Team Leader

a. **Forms of bullying witnessed/experienced by Tim, as defined by the MMSD handbook:**

Belittling a person in public or in private; Unwarranted or invalid criticism; Excessive monitoring of a person's work

b. **List any negative interactions or patterns of bullying you have experienced or witnessed from Tim.**

"The below is copied and pasted from an email that I sent to the Chief of Staff on September 1, 2021. Less than two months later I tendered my resignation from MMSD, which was both my longest and most favorite job at the point, until it wasn't. The comments were made by Tim LeMonds." Quotes from Tim LeMonds in the email excerpts include:

- *"Tony, I don't mean to diminish your problems, but EVERYONE has problems,"*
- *"Wait, wait, wait, I gotta tell you that is a pet peeve of mine. I am not gonna praise you just for DOING YOUR JOB,"*

c. **When did you first observe or encounter workplace bullying from Tim?** "Within the first week of his employment Tim had made our Graphic Designer (at the time) Amy cry, and I believe this was before he was even our team supervisor.

d. **Do you feel the supervisor's behavior inhibits the department's ability to properly function?** Yes.

e. **Was Tim's behavior a factor in your resignation from MMSD?** Yes

Section 4: Resolution and Conclusion

In writing this complaint, it is difficult to fully convey the effect years of screaming, demoralizing criticism, name-calling, belittling, lying, and intimidation has had on us as employees, especially the female staff members and a person of color. For current employees, every day there is a gnawing knot in the pit of our stomachs, a constant anxiety that one phone call or unsuspecting Zoom meeting could end with being yelled at or having our jobs threatened. For past employees, the vast majority, if not all of

them, have reported their negative encounters with Tim in their exit interviews. We would like to think these concerns were, and are, taken seriously as they denote Tim's pattern of abuse, and the effects it has on department retention.

We have wished and hoped Tim LeMond's treatment was temporary, something we could adjust to with time. But years later, it is clear Tim's attitude and actions toward his coworkers, especially women, cannot be resolved—it is a deep, inherent belief that others are not worthy of basic respect. We do not feel Tim LeMond is fit to work in our department. It is our job as communications employees to promote our school district's key values: excellence, belonging, racial equity and social justice, voice, focus, and creativity. It seems our department leader, and the self-proclaimed "Mouthpiece of MMSD," should be expected to model these same values.

Thank you again,

Ellie Herman, Communications Specialist

Brad Mackey, Communications Web Programmer

Mike Wetzel, Communications Media Producer/Director

Ryan Budziszewski, Former Bilingual Communications Specialist

Taryn Johnson, Former Communications Bilingual Project Specialist

Liz Merfeld, Former Communications Public Information Officer

Tony Rodriguez, Former Communications Web Team Leader