

## **Remembering Chris Lloyd**

Many of you reading this were close to Chris Lloyd, but I'm sure there are folks who didn't have the honor of knowing this courageous, wise, and loving soul. Not a day goes by in this work that I don't call upon his example and the advice he shared.

After leaving work as a producer at ABC Evening News, Chris began his teaching career at Blair High School. There he first revealed his strength of character and passion for justice. As the school's media instructor, against the wishes of the administration, he bravely championed students' rights to free speech on the issue of gay rights. The controversy gained national attention, and Chris risked disciplinary action. But he persisted and prevailed: the students' production was aired.

From Blair, Chris went on to work at several other schools, including Ridgeview, Hoover and Baker Middle Schools. Although the vice president's role is definitely a full-time job, Chris was the first VP to insist on keeping a foot in the classroom. To better understand the needs at every level of our work, he went to Weller Road Elementary and co-taught for an hour each school day. There he delighted in his young students and deeply admired the gifted colleagues with whom he worked. He told me once that he wished he had started as an elementary teacher because, although no teachers work harder than they do, he found teaching our littlest learners to be the most rewarding.

Chris's service to the union spanned at least two decades. He took on various leadership roles, including Middle School CTL chair, MCEA board member, vice president, and president. He also served at the state level on the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board, and informally as a frequent advisor to the Kirwan Commission, the architects of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Throughout, he was a champion for lifting our profession and giving educators power to set and uphold standards for our work.

From 2015-2021 Chris provided the vision that has transformed MCEA from a service model, staff-led organization to the strong, member-led, member-

powered union that we are today. And because he insisted on leading by sharing power with others, the momentum of that transformation is still strong today. It has been such an honor to follow him and to do my best to carry on the work of helping members find the collective strength and courage to fight for the improvements we need in working and learning conditions in schools across the system.

Chris gave his all to promote excellence in public education and to build our union as an agent of social justice. It is tragic that after such outstanding service, his life was cut short by a rare cancer that is hard to detect and nearly impossible to treat. To the end, he was cheerful and brave, even as he acknowledged that his time here was to be short. In my last conversation with him early this fall, he was frank about his situation. But he told me that the good days he was having with his wife, Pam, and their rescue dog, Boyd, were a rich blessing that outweighed his suffering. He shared with me his gratitude for the kind and expert care he received from his nurses. And he wanted to know all about us and our challenges and progress.

What is clearest to me is how much love Chris poured into his work, and how much he truly cared about each of us as individuals and all of us as a union. He was the most patient listener, and he made sure that he was kind, clear, thorough, and honest whenever he spoke.

Chris's signature line always included "loving husband." I'm going to be frank: while many of us found it charming that he would share this personal reference in his work correspondence, for me, it carried a whiff of male privilege. (If I were to sign off as "loving wife," it would almost certainly damage my professional image.) But I recognize now that Chris was making sure that everyone, he corresponded with got to see him as a whole person. And while he certainly loved Pam first and foremost, he had a deep love for all of us, as well. With that signature line, he was trying to show us that we, too, should be free to reveal our full humanity to one another.

So, while Chris is no longer with us, let's all do our best, as individuals and as a union, to live up to the model he set for us. He put us on this path, and we are seeing results. Together let's continue to strive for the respect we deserve,

and the resources and support we need to give every child our very best. Chris has left us a wonderful legacy and example.

We've made great strides since he retired as president. Our building action teams keep growing in number and effectiveness. Member engagement is higher than ever. We negotiated the best contract we've ever seen, we've won grievance after grievance, and we've had amazing success in electing our Apple Ballot candidates. The MCPS board and executive leadership appear finally to be coming to the realization that we're a force to be reckoned with and a valuable partner.

We face many opportunities and challenges in the months ahead, but we've got the power we need to keep making progress on the path that Chris blazed and walked with us.

May he rest in peace and power.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Martin

President MCEA

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