



November 20, 2022

Tampa Bay Rays
One Tropicana Drive
St. Petersburg, FL 33705

To Whom It May Concern,

We are honored to write in support of the Tampa Bay Rays. The Rays organization is an exemplary community partner – they seek to understand our community’s challenges and find ways they can support the work being done to meet those challenges. We have been fortunate to partner with the Tampa Bay Rays for over 16 years, making them one of our longest-standing community partners. The Rays have a strong presence at all three of our schools, and all three counties wherein they operate – Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Polk.

We are so thankful for the support of the Rays organization over the course of our multifaceted and deeply impactful partnership. In 16 years, the Rays have donated over \$2 million to the Academy Prep schools to support student scholarships, which translates to over 100 full total student scholarships. Our schools serve students whose family income puts them at or below the federal poverty level, and all of our students attend school tuition-free. Supporting student scholarships means our students have access to educational opportunities they may not otherwise receive. By supporting our schools at such a significant level, the Tampa Bay Rays have proven for years their steadfast commitment to equity in education – that all students deserve the benefit of life-changing educational opportunities.

Not only have the Rays provided financial support for our schools, they have also invested deeply in our organizations through volunteerism and programmatic partnership. This summer, Academy Prep Centers and the Rays launched a STEM class for all 7th grade students at each school – The Science of Baseball. Rays Baseball operations staff taught a class daily in our three schools for the month of June. Topics ranged from how to calculate batting averages, launch angles, and infield diamond distances to physiological lessons on stretching, body movement, and nutrition. Our students learned the value of math and science in everyday jobs and pastimes. This program helped our students apply mathematical concepts to something fun, further engaging them in STEM, and fostering a love for baseball and sport. The Rays staff have further promoted STEM learning by volunteering as judges in our science fairs. The Tampa Bay Rays have made long-lasting impact in our community and we are excited about the future.

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We fully support the Hines and Rays RFP proposal which not only outlines plans for a new ballpark, but even more importantly, addresses the challenges our community faces. The overwhelming majority of students on all three of our campuses are students of color, and we appreciate that the proposal celebrates cultural diversity and has a focus on equality of opportunity, and on historic preservation and recognition of the Gas Plant site, particularly as our St. Petersburg campus is located in the historic 22nd Ave South neighborhood. Academy Prep focuses heavily on the success of our graduates through our Graduate Support Services programs, and we are looking forward to the workforce development elements of the proposal as well, as it provides opportunities for economic advancement and professional growth, of which we hope our graduates see the benefit.

We believe that in partnership with the Rays, this development will create a strong foundation for our community for decades to come. We are excited to be partners in investing in the future of our community along with the Rays through education, and we look forward to many more years of celebrating the successes of our partnership.

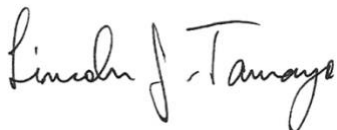
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gina Burkett".

Gina Burkett
Head of School, Academy Prep Center of St. Petersburg

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "L'Tanya Evans".

L'Tanya Evans
Head of School, Academy Prep Center of Tampa

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lincoln J. Tamayo".

Lincoln Tamayo
Head of School, Academy Prep Center of Lakeland
COO, Academy Prep Foundation