



October 22, 2012

Dear Fellow East Siders:

The November ballot will include seven State questions (numbers 1-7) and eleven City questions (numbers 8-18). Question Number 8, if approved, would authorize the City to borrow \$40 million for infrastructure repairs. Question 18, if approved, would amend the Home Rule Charter to reform the redistricting process. I worked with Common Cause to draft and advance Question 18. The Providence Journal published an op-ed piece by John Marion and me to make the case for approving this ballot question. You can read the op-ed by clicking on this link: [Redistricting op-ed](#). You can read background information about the eleven Providence ballot questions by clicking on this link: [Providence Ballot Questions Memo](#). As the memo indicates, Questions 9 through 17 propose a series of technical revisions to the Home Rule Charter to make the language more consistent. I plan to vote in favor of all eleven City questions, and I urge you to as well.

This past Wednesday (October 17) the Education Committee heard a presentation from the School Department concerning the teacher evaluation program that began last academic year. The School Department prepared a summary Power Point presentation you can review by clicking here: [Power Point Presentation](#). As you can see, Providence is moving forward with a new program called "Peer Assistance and Review", under which a joint committee of teachers and administrators work together with a teacher who is not performing at a satisfactory level before the administration seeks to remove the teacher from the classroom. The Providence program incorporates elements of the State's model teacher evaluation program (described in this link: [State Program description](#), adapted to Providence's circumstances as described in this link: [Providence evaluation FAQ's](#)). The overall theme of the presentation was to describe the School Department's judgment that it is best for students to work to improve teachers rather than to punish them. I see some value in this approach; however, as a parent I am familiar with the observation that there are teachers who simply are not fit to teach, and who need to be removed from the system for the benefit of students as promptly as possible. It is my hope that this evaluation program will strike the proper balance between giving teachers who can benefit from positive support the support they need, while ensuring that ineffective teachers who cannot improve are exited from the system.

I am researching the application by the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School for "in-district charter" status. I have met with the principal, who explained the gains in autonomy and funding he hopes the school can achieve through this application. I expressed to him my view that it is critical that the school retain its neighborhood identity. I stated that of course everyone would support a neighborhood school with greater resources and autonomy, but it would not be acceptable to trade off one for the other. I introduced a resolution at the City Council stating the view that neighborhood schools are critical to a community's fabric. You can read the resolution by clicking on this link: [Neighborhood School Resolution](#). The entire City Council joined the resolution as co-sponsors. The City Council assigned the resolution to the Education Committee. On November 7, 2012 at 5:45 p.m., the Education Committee will hold a hearing on the subject of "in-district" charter schools. I am hopeful we will be able to obtain more information about this issue by then, if not sooner. In the meantime, I would like to encourage parents in the neighborhood to get more involved on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Samuel D. Zurier'.