

CHAIRMAN CARUOLO AND HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD  
OF REGENTS:

MY NAME IS SAM ZURIER. I AM A PROVIDENCE RESIDENT, AND THE  
FATHER OF THREE CHILDREN WORKING THEIR WAY THROUGH THE  
PROVIDENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS. I ALSO SERVE ON THE PROVIDENCE CITY  
COUNCIL. IN THAT CAPACITY, I WORKED ON A REPORT CONCERNING THE  
ACHIEVEMENT FIRST MAYORAL ACADEMY APPLICATION, AND I HAVE  
PREPARED FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION A COPY OF THE REPORT, ALONG  
WITH A COPY OF AN OP-ED PIECE PUBLISHED IN SATURDAY'S PROVIDENCE  
JOURNAL WHICH SUMMARIZES SOME OF THE REPORT'S FINDINGS AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS.

THE KEY RECOMMENDATION IS THAT YOU CONSIDER APPROVING  
THE CHARTER FOR THE FIRST OF THE TWO PLANNED ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOLS, BUT DEFER FOR THREE YEARS YOUR CONSIDERATION OF THE  
SECOND SCHOOL. THIS WOULD ALLOW US TO GAIN THE BULK OF THE  
ADVANTAGES CITED BY ACHIEVEMENT FIRST'S PROPONENTS, WHILE  
MITIGATING SOME OF THE HARMS EXPRESSED BY OPPONENTS.

WHILE THE REPORT DISCUSSES THIS ISSUE IN GREATER DETAIL, I WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS A BROADER THEME TODAY, NAMELY TO BALANCE THE SHORT AND LONG TERM. IN THE SHORT TERM, AN ACHIEVEMENT FIRST MAYORAL ACADEMY COULD BRING A CHOICE TO SOME PARENTS, A BETTER CHANCE OF A STRONG ACADEMIC EDUCATION TO THE CHILDREN WHO ATTEND THE SCHOOL, AND A USEFUL EXAMPLE FOR THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP.

WITH THAT SAID, THERE ARE LONG TERM COMPROMISES INVOLVED WITH ACHIEVEMENT FIRST'S MODEL. THE NEW YORK AND CONNECTICUT PROGRAMS CONTAIN STUDENT BODIES THAT ARE BETWEEN 97% AND 99% AFRICAN AMERICAN OR LATINO, EVEN WHILE THE HOST COMMUNITIES TYPICALLY CONTAIN 10% WHITE STUDENTS AND 2% ASIAN STUDENTS. AS A RESULT, ACHIEVEMENT FIRST CURRENTLY SERVES THE POOR AND PEOPLE OF COLOR, TO THE VIRTUAL EXCLUSION OF EVERYONE ELSE. IN THE LONG TERM, WE SHOULD AIM FOR MORE DIVERSE PUBLIC SCHOOLS THAT COMBINE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL EDUCATION.

WHEN WE HAVE DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC DIVERSITY IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS, WE INCREASE THE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF OUR STUDENTS AND ALSO ENCOURAGE HARMONY IN OUR GREATER SOCIETY. MY MIDDLE CLASS CHILDREN HAVE CLASSMATES AND FRIENDS FROM ALL PARTS OF THE CITY AND MANY DIFFERENT POINTS ALONG THE DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC CONTINUUM.

IN CONTRAST, THE ACHIEVEMENT FIRST PROGRAM AIMS FOR A K-12 SELF-CONTAINED MODEL SO THAT THE STUDENTS WHO ENTER IN KINDERGARTEN WILL NOT INTERACT WITH ANY OTHER STUDENTS THROUGHOUT THEIR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION. NO MATTER HOW COMPLETE THEIR ACADEMIC EDUCATION IS THROUGH THIS PROCESS, IN MY OPINION THEIR OVERALL EDUCATION WILL BE LIMITED.

FOR THESE REASONS, I SUBMIT WE SHOULD OPEN A SINGLE ACHIEVEMENT FIRST SCHOOL TO ADDRESS OUR URGENT NEEDS, WHILE RETAINING SPACE IN THE LONG TERM FOR MORE BALANCED PUBLIC SCHOOLS THAT EDUCATE THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION.