

COMMENTS FOR JAN 12 2017 SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

By Arden Levy, 1400 Crestwood Drive, Alexandria, VA 22302:

Keep PB72 in George Mason

Members of the School Board – thank you for taking the time to consider my comments, and the best interests of ACPS students.

Purpose of statement: I urge you not to approve redistricting plan Option 9a without including the modifications to PB72 that will keep PB72 included in the George Mason district as walkers per the attached proposal (previously submitted to the Board). In the context of the budgeting process, which I understand is up for discussion, it is important to reconsider an unfair impact on our children even before it is clear how the George Mason rebuild will affect the criteria.

Why this is important to me: As I have expressed previously to this Board, I am a new resident of PB72 and the parent of 2 children; my youngest is a 4th grader at George Mason. My children will already be in middle school by the time this change would take effect for them. However, I am here to urge this Board to keep PB72 in George Mason because I am so concerned about the impact of this decision on our neighborhood's children, changing them from George Mason walkers to Charles Barrett busers. As I reluctantly have become more and more involved, I have seen how few parents of preschoolers with rising elementary school students know that the Board is considering imposing a change that will have disparate impact on the children in our neighborhood.

Key points: The current exclusion of PB72 kids means that Option 9a does not meet the Overarching goal of redistricting: “Enable students to attend their neighborhood school with

equitable access to instructional programs and services, a cost effective manner, unless there is a demonstrated need or desire to attend a designated citywide program.”

- 1) Option 9a fails to reach that goal by cutting PB72 kids out of their walkable neighborhood school, while increasing transportation costs and decreasing neighborhood safety and affecting the community. Large majority of kids from PB72 CANNOT walk to Charles Barrett; hence George Mason is its only walkable Elementary School. PB14 (currently bussed to George Mason) can walk to Charles Barrett. We are NOT suggesting to cut all of PB14, as the Board is very concerned about Free and Reduced Meal rates (FARM) –only those irregular pockets of housing outside the “crescent” of PB14. This small portion would replace PB72 numbers and while only slightly increasing Charles Barret’s FARM percentage.
- 2) Option 9a fails to make a real capacity difference by cutting out PB 72. By focusing solely on capacity in terms of total school numbers, the consultants have failed to analyze the real-life impact of the change. Removing these 60+ children will NOT have a real impact on capacity when spread out over 6 different grades.
- 3) Removing PB72 from George Mason not only diminishes the diversity criteria, but also it leaves George Mason as **the only elementary school in ACPS without a “middle income”** group. Even though Mr. Cropper agreed at the meeting on Tuesday night that the “socio-economic diversity” is important, adopting Option 9a would mean overlooking that very diversity. The proposal that was submitted to include PB72 provides alternatives for the School Board to add students to Charles Barret from PB8 that will satisfy criteria, such as diversity, transportation, safety, and cost.