



## Public Comments: Salem Mesfin

Comments on Implementation of Restorative Justice

May 19, 2015

- Good Evening Chairman Graf, members of the school board, Superintendent Crawley, ACPS administrators and staff and fellow community members.
- My name is Salem Mesfin, and I am a member of Tenants and Workers United: Alexandria United Teens. I am also a junior at T.C. Williams High School.
- I am here today to share my thoughts on the implementation process on Restorative Justice.
- First and foremost, I'd like to thank you all for your cooperation and time to listen to our voices and needs. As you know, we have been working on behalf of our community and in partnership with ACPS for the past four years.
- We really appreciate the Superintendent taking the time to meeting with us on the 12<sup>th</sup> and meeting with the community weeks before and making commitments on having a plan for August of this year on Restorative Justice.
- It has been one school year since funding has been allocated for Restorative Justice at Minnie Howard and International Academy.
- Since that time, we have seen slight progress. For Example, there have been some trainings on building community circles for teachers.
- However, we have yet to see a comprehensive written plan or curriculum. As a result, it has also been difficult for us to assess the implementation of the program. We need to see a clear plan and clear goals for Restorative Justice and how it will be moving forward.
- A clear plan and curriculum would include a Restorative Justice Coordinator at each site to ensure there is assistance in the coordination of the day to day restorative practices at each school.
- It is critical that funding is used effectively, we need to see a written plan for the implementation of Restorative Justice by Early August 2015. Without this plan, we will not know whether ACPS is on the right track.

- This is especially important if Restorative Justice will be expanded from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and International Academy to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade as well.
- Funding is critical for training on building community circles for students and teachers, as well as harm circles for administrators. These trainings are important because they build important relationships for all members of the school community. We hope you agree that we need specific funding for Restorative Justice and better accountability to make sure that Restorative Justice is successful. Thank you.