

Remarks by Xiao Boynton to the School Board Meeting on January 12, 2017

Good evening, members of the School Board. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you again this evening, and thank you for your tireless work in this lengthy process of redistricting.

My name is Xiao Boynton. As some of you know, I am a resident on Oakcrest Dr in George Mason's Planning Block 72 with two young boys. Like many of his friends in the preschool on my street, my rising Kindergartner is eagerly waiting to enter George Mason this fall.

My family and I are newly returned Alexandria City residents. We moved back this last summer, a decision made almost entirely based on the appeal of sending our boys to the walking distance neighborhood school George Mason. Instead, current map 9a will put my young boys on a bus to another school twice the distance away, depriving them of the opportunity to walk to their own neighborhood school. This is not acceptable. I have heard some members stating previously that unhappy residents are just an inevitable part of redistricting. Yet, I urge you to ensure that the unhappiness is resulted from a fair decision, rather than a result of the significant violations of redistricting criteria and inequity in the Board's decision.

The fact is – the majority of PB72 students *cannot* walk to Charles Barrett. The consultant's miscalculation of us as walkers to Barrett needs to be addressed. George Mason is our *ONLY* walking distance school. Students on other streets – in PB14, part of PB8, and even Valley Dr which was most recently taken out of PB72 to put back in George Mason – live under a mile to Charles Barrett. We don't. The walkability issue is compounded by the fundamental impact on George Mason's diversity associated with map 9a. Among all contiguous PBs in George Mason neighborhood, PB72 is the *ONLY* block with diversified housing, including many townhomes on Woodbine St, Dogwood and Kenwood Dr, and the Kingsgate condo community at the southern end. Middle-income students in PB72 are an integral fabric of George Mason's *rich* diversity. Cutting out the "middle" that glues together the haves and the have nots at George Mason is simply not a workable solution to maintaining diversity, let alone maintaining *rich* diversity as stated in your criteria.

Focusing on one criteria of capacity takes map 9a further away from the rest of the criteria and as a whole, deviating from the Consultants' stated redistricting practice applied in other planning blocks, *vis-à-vis* criteria. And not to mention the notion that PB72 removal would alleviate George Mason's capacity is incorrect. Our estimated enrollment data in 2018 is 62 kids, which do not equate to the removal of a single classroom at any given grade.

Earlier this week, PB72 neighbors presented a proposal to the Board to keep our block in our neighborhood school and retain the diversity of George Mason walkers. I strongly urge you to consider incorporating our proposal in a revised map. Please do *not* vote for option 9a without making this necessary, small adjustment concerning PB72. It is the only way to bring the map closer to the redistricting criteria and therefor ensure equity in redistricting. Thank you.