November 9, 2021

Dear Frederick Elementary School Families, Students, and Community Members,

City Schools is committed to making sure that every school across the city provides our students with high-quality educational experiences that enables students to thrive, supports their learning and encourages their personal growth.

Part of our work in reaching this goal includes an annual review of the district’s schools and programs that looks at a broad range of considerations, including academic performance, school climate, school programming, enrollment trends, conditions of school facilities, the range and balance of school options in different parts of the city, and the 21st Century School Buildings Plan. It also includes the district’s review of schools operated by outside entities, such as charter schools. Frederick’s operator Baltimore Curriculum Project, Inc. was reviewed and while the school has areas of growth and focus, the school has several areas where it received effective and highly effective ratings.

Tonight, based on the results of the renewal process and the recommendation of the Charter and Operator-Led Schools Advisory Board, I am recommending to the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners (“Board”) that the contract with Baltimore Curriculum Project, Inc., your school’s operator, be renewed for a three-year period. This recommendation is an endorsement of your school’s quality that also acknowledges areas where the school has room to improve.

For more information on the findings of the renewal review, and to see your school’s full renewal report please visit: www.baltimorecityschools.org/Charter-Schools. The Board will hold a public work session on all renewal recommendations on Thursday, December 9, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. This is an additional opportunity for the operator to make its case for renewal to the Board. (Details about how to join this meeting are on the second page of this letter.)

Additionally, I have another pending recommendation that impacts your school community.

Frederick is housed in its 21st Century facility and has space to safely accommodate additional students. Increasing the zone for Frederick to have the ability to serve more students not only helps additional students and families to access programming and resources afforded to the school community; it would also help increase the capacity of Frederick to offer more academic programming that would also benefit existing families through additional per-student funding.

It is located near, Steuart Hill Academic Academy, a very small program with low enrollment. The facility that houses Steuart Hill also has a lot of challenges. Frederick and Steuart Hill are also located near Franklin Square, another program with capacity to serve additional students in a healthier school facility.

Therefore, tonight, based on the results of this year’s review, I am recommending that the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners consider closing Steuart Hill Academic Academy at the end of this school year, in June 2022, and splitting the zone between Franklin Square Elementary/Middle and Frederick Elementary. I believe this will increase student and family access to schools in better buildings with the capacity to have increased per-student funding to sustain rich, robust, and varied educational programs.

If the closure is approved, the school communities would combine starting in the 2022-2023 school year. The Frederick zone would be expanded to include the portion of the Steuart Hill zone west of Gilmor, and the Franklin Square zone would be expanded to include the portion of the Steuart Hill zone east of Gilmor Street. I am also recommending that the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners consider returning the Steuart Hill building to the city of Baltimore in summer 2022.

As a member of the Frederick Elementary School community, your feedback on this recommendation is critical. A meeting will take place at your school on Monday, December 13 at 5:30 p.m. where you can learn more and get answers to your questions.

In addition to attending meetings to better understand the reasons for the recommendations, you can also view the report that has been provided to the Board. The report is titled Annual Review of Schools: Review and Recommendations, 2021-22 (“Report”). The Report outlines the recommendations and the factors the Board must consider in this process. The Report is available on the district’s website (www.baltimorecityschools.org) and upon request can be reviewed at your school.
You can provide written feedback to the Board from now through 5:00 p.m. on Friday, January 7, 2022. Written comments must include full identification of the sender and should be directed to the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, 200 E. North Ave., Room 406, Baltimore, Maryland 21202, or sent by email to portfoliorecommendations@bcps.k12.md.us.

In addition, there are two opportunities where you can give oral commentary to the Board on the recommendations.

- Public hearing: Thursday, December 2, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.
- Special work session: Wednesday, December 15, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency, all Board meetings are being held remotely. Please check the Board calendar or BoardDocs on the City Schools website for call-in information to observe the meetings which can be found here: https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/board-meetings. The opportunity for oral testimony will be closed after completion of the December 15 special session.

The ultimate decision on these recommendations rests with the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. After consideration of all of the factors, other information learned through the process including public feedback, the Board will vote on the recommendations at a meeting on Tuesday, January 11, 2022. If the Board votes to approve these recommendations, district office staff will be available to meet with you to ensure that the transition process is smooth and meets students’ and families’ needs.

Thank you for supporting our schools and students. We look forward to working in partnership with students, families, and school communities to create a district of high-quality school programs that meets the needs of every student in Baltimore.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises
Chief Executive Officer