November 9, 2021

Dear Furman L. Templeton 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. Furman’s operator F.L. Templeton Preparatory Academy, Inc. was reviewed and while the school has areas of growth and focus, the school has several areas where it received 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 that the contract with F.L. Templeton Preparatory Academy, 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.

Furman is housed in a school facility with recent improvements located near Eutaw Marshburn Elementary, a school that has been under-enrolled for several years. While currently safe, the Eutaw Marshburn facility has serious structural issues that prevent long-term use. In addition, to your school being near Eutaw Marshburn, there are 2 other elementary programs within a mile of Eutaw Marshburn housed in facilities in better condition than Eutaw Marshburn - Dorothy I. Height Elementary and the Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary; they also have space to safely serve additional students.

Thus, I am also recommending that the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners consider closing Eutaw-Marshburn Elementary School in June 2022, at the end of the current school year, and consider rezoning students to either The Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary School, Dorothy I. Height Elementary School, or Furman Templeton Preparatory Academy.

If the closure of Eutaw Marshburn is approved, starting in the 2022-23 school year, students in Eutaw Marshburn zone who live northwest of Laurens St. would be rezoned to Dorothy I. Height Elementary; students who live southeast of Laurens St. and portions of Furman Templeton zone directly below Eutaw Marshburn would be rezoned to The Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary; students who live southwest of Pennsylvania Ave. from both the Eutaw Marshburn and Samuel Coleridge Taylor’s zones would be rezoned to Furman Templeton Preparatory Academy. If these zone changes are approved this would not impact existing families but would apply to new families. (To view the proposed zone changes in a map, please read the Annual Renewal Report found here: www.baltimorecityschools.org)

As a member of the Furman Templeton school community, your feedback on this recommendation is critical. A meeting will take place beginning at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 7, where you can learn more and get answers to your questions.
In addition to attending meetings to better understand the reasons for the recommendation, you can also view the report that has been provided to the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners (“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.

After consideration of all of the factors and other information learned through the process including public feedback, the Board will vote on all of these recommendations at its 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