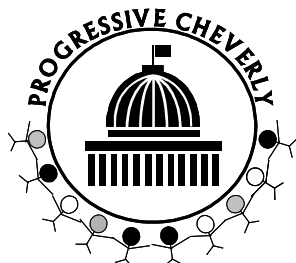


Progressive Cheverly

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**Statement at the Prince
George's County
General Assembly
Delegation Public
Hearing
April 1, 2013**

Madam Chair and Members of the Prince George's County Delegation,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment publicly. My name is Paul Thompson. I am Co-chair of Progressive Cheverly, a grassroots organization from Cheverly and surrounding communities committed to working at all levels of government for progressive change. I am here today representing the over 300 members and supporters of our organization.

Progressive Cheverly strongly supports the broad outlines of County Executive Baker's proposal as modified in SB 1071, and we commend Mr. Baker and Delegate Ivey for their advocacy of these needed changes. In a vote completed just yesterday, nearly 90% of our members voted in support of this measure.

As many others have noted, the record speaks for itself. The lack of sustained and significant progress in student achievement and the revolving door at the top both bespeak a system that is not living up to our legitimate expectations. At a time of great progress and even greater promise in our County with regard to public safety, economic development, and the transparency and responsiveness of Government, the County Schools continue to lag. Until that broken link in the chain is restored, the County cannot reach the level of prosperity and livability we all desire.

Some have regretted the timing of the proposal, coming as it does near the end of the General Assembly session. Ideally, there would be more time to discuss and reflect on it. But the essence of leadership is to act decisively at critical times, and there is no question that the impending selection of a new Superintendent is such a time. Desperate times call for bold measures.

Others have expressed concern that this proposal would concentrate too much power in the hands of the County Executive. It's never easy to strike the right balance in a democracy between central authority and appropriate checks and balances, and our membership has expressed the desire that the legitimate rights of county employees, including collective bargaining agreements, be respected. However, we believe that the modified proposal effectively addresses those concerns. It would give the County Executive desperately needed authority to drive real improvement in the performance of the schools, while keeping final

approval of the budget in the hands of the School Board -- a reasonable compromise between competing yet legitimate visions of governance.

If I may close on a personal note, I am also the father of two adult sons who received their entire pre-college education in the Prince George's County Public Schools. My sons are both proud to be products of our public schools, and the education they received there laid the foundation for their academic success at major universities. But the unfortunate and well-documented truth is that there are many schools in our county that are not able to consistently offer an education of the highest quality. As a parent and as a citizen, I believe we should not rest until every Prince George's County public school student receives the opportunities that only a solid education can provide. This proposal will not solve all the problems of our School system, but we believe it is an important first step.

Thank you.

Paul Thompson, Co-chair,

Progressive Cheverly