



Mayor of Providence

Jorge O. Elorza

August 5, 2022

The Honorable Members of the Providence City Council
Providence City Hall
25 Dorrance Street
Providence, RI 02903

**Regarding: "Resolution forwarding Ballot Questions to the Secretary of State for placement on the November Ballot"
Charter Recommendations**

Honorable Members of the City Council,

I thank the members of the Charter Review Commission for taking on this immensely important work. I thank them sincerely for their efforts.

During my tenure as Mayor, I have remained steadfast in my belief that improvements to Providence Public Schools will require transformative change. I know that the City Council wants to do what is best for our kids and assume that their recommendation is born out of a deep frustration with our public schools and the feeling that something dramatic needs to be done to turn things around.

However, I believe that having elections for school board members is a terrible idea. That is why I am standing with education leaders, parents and community members to veto this proposal.

First and foremost, there was limited community engagement and this was a decision that was driven by City Council members whom comprised a majority of the committee (5 out of 9 members). There was very limited outreach, such as proactive engagement with education leaders, parents and students, when crafting this proposal. Community members are correct to expect greater outreach and they have raised concerns of this proposal being designed without PPSD parents at the table.

This proposal would require candidates to run geographically large campaigns that would require significant resources. Successful campaigns will likely have to raise more money than Providence Council members, Representatives and State Senators. This significantly limits the pool of people who can realistically win a campaign and it could make the school board less reflective of our city.



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Also, the grave danger of electing school board members is that special interest groups will likely run their own candidates for these seats. This creates the very real risk that the interests pursued by these members will not be in the best interest of our children. We should avoid this at all cost.

I believe that the core problems with our public schools is that, in practice, the superintendent does not run the district, principals do not run their buildings, and teachers are not incentivized in the right way. The City Council's proposal will not change any of this.

I agree wholeheartedly that Providence public schools need radical change but disagree that a hybrid school board is the answer. There is no evidence showing that elected school boards are better than appointed ones in boosting student performance. And in fact, there's ample evidence showing that they are no better. I strongly believe that injecting more politics into our schools would be a terrible outcome.

There is too much at stake when it comes to our city's future and this recommendation will not help. I look forward to continue working with our city leaders to address the challenges facing our schools and providing our students the best opportunities to grow, learn and thrive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. Elorza", written over a horizontal line.

Jorge O. Elorza
Mayor