



September 10, 2015

Dear Teachers and Families:

The beginning of the new school year is an exciting time. Our children are back in the classroom, and our staff is hard at work doing everything we can to provide students with an outstanding education.

This year, however, we have an additional issue on which we must stand up for our families and children. Due to unlawful decisions by the school system administration, education funds for our children are not making it to the classroom. And a new funding formula proposed for next year will shift even more funding from classrooms to the school system's central office. The proposal will result in funding losses for our two schools, Afya PCS and Tunbridge PCS, conservatively calculated at \$512,000. This is after a funding cut of \$124,000 this year. Two years ago the district attempted to cut our funding by \$104,000. As you can see, there is a clear pattern here. Furthermore, expenses, many of which are driven by school system initiatives, rise at between four and six percent annually.

To correct this injustice, Afya Baltimore Inc., along with other public charter school operators from around the city, is filing a lawsuit today in Baltimore City Circuit Court – asking the court system to, once again, require the Baltimore City Public School System to follow the law. Given the repeated accounting errors and accountability problems at its North Avenue headquarters, families of public school children deserve transparency.

As you know, public charter schools are effective for our families – with increased accountability and better outcomes, on average, for our students. The fact that more than 5,500 students are on charter school waiting lists, in Baltimore City alone, is a clear indication that parents see the value of schools like ours.

Here are some of the important facts that led to our decision:

- In 2007, Maryland's highest court, made clear that public charter school students deserve equal funding that follows them to the classroom – regardless of which public school they attend.
- Yet, since 2011, general fund revenues for Baltimore City's Public Schools have increased by 11.6% - from \$1.075 billion to \$1.2 billion – while per pupil funding for public charter schools has declined from \$9,412 to \$9,387.
- Public charter schools represent more than 15% of total enrollment, but receive only about 10% of the school system's general fund revenue.
- The school system recently made its proposal for the next school year, and it shifts even more funding from classrooms to central administration.
- In other words, less money is getting to our classrooms, and more money is getting stuck at North Avenue – justified through vaguely described “services” that charter schools neither want nor need.
- This is not happening to students in other counties, and it is against the law.



Maryland's public charter school law is clear. And the Maryland Court of Appeals reaffirmed in 2007 that the State Board of Education, not Baltimore City central school staff, should determine how funding follows students to our classrooms.

Additionally, it is important to note, this litigation is solely about ensuring that the funding our students are due follows them to our classrooms – in a clear and transparent manner – to pay teachers and fund other education priorities. It does not involve any other issues about which you may have heard.

We were hoping it would not come to this. Our alliance of public charter school leaders proposed a collaborative workgroup to find a compromise. We offered to engage in mediation to find a solution. But the school system would not agree to mediation, and insists that it can essentially pick a per-pupil funding number – without the transparency required by law.

Please know that we will continue to do everything in our power to ensure that your child receives an excellent education. The lawsuit filed today is necessary for us to keep that promise.

Thank you for supporting our school. We will continue to update you on this effort, as we push to make Baltimore public schools better for all students. In this regard, look for communications from the school about meetings for parents and teachers alike so that we can answer questions and keep you informed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnette A. Richardson".

Johnette A. Richardson  
Board President  
Afya Baltimore Inc.  
jrichardson@afyabaltimore.org

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Will McKenna".

Will McKenna  
Founder/Executive Director  
Afya Baltimore Inc.  
wmckenna@afyabaltimore.org