

EXHIBIT A



Building the Future

Carroll County Public Schools

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Stephen H. Guthrie
Superintendent

January 14, 2016

Mr. Guffrie M. Smith, Jr., President
Maryland State Board of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Dear President Smith:

As President of Board of Education of Carroll County, I am writing to you on a matter of great concern to my Board. Specifically, the purpose of this correspondence is to notify you that we believe that a State Board member has acted outside of the long established role of individual State Board members in appeals before the State Board of Education.

As you are aware, several appeals have been filed concerning our December 9, 2015 Board of Education's approval of a school closure and boundary adjustment plan. On December 23, 2015 Dr. Michele Guyton visited and toured North Carroll High School, one of our schools included in the school closure plan, for what she described as a fact-finding visit. As per Dr. Guyton's request, we are expressing our concerns in this letter.

We are concerned that Dr. Guyton neither notified the Superintendent of Schools nor the principal prior to her visit. Instead, Principal Thomas Clowes, was notified by a citizen, who opposes the closure of North Carroll High School that a State Board member would be visiting the next day. This community member asked Mr. Clowes not to contact Superintendent Guthrie, but to keep the visit quiet and low key. Nonetheless, Mr. Clowes contacted Mr. Guthrie who replied that he would change his schedule to be present at the school when Dr. Guyton arrived.

After Dr. Guyton entered the school through a side entrance and eventually made her way to the school office, Superintendent Guthrie greeted Dr. Guyton and the community member and asked her for the purpose of the visit. Dr. Guyton stated that her visit was a "fact finding" mission to better inform her ability to address the imminent appeal. When Superintendent Guthrie asked Dr. Guyton if he could meet with her to express his concern over the visit, Dr. Guyton refused saying that she preferred that any concerns be put in writing. He and the principal then accompanied them on a tour of the school.

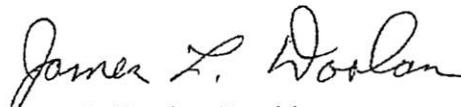
We believe that it was inappropriate for a State Board member to visit any school for a fact-finding visit when the filing of a school closure appeal was imminent even if the appeal had not yet been filed. This is especially so where the arrangement for the visit was not coordinated with the Superintendent.

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We also question what knowledge could be gained from visiting a single school in our district without visiting all high schools to make comparisons. Further, as per COMAR 13A.01.05.05 the standard of review for appeal decisions in this matter, "shall be that the local board's decisions shall be considered prima facie correct, and the State Board may not substitute its judgment for that of the local board unless the decision is arbitrary, unreasonable, or illegal."

Thank you in advance for your time and attention to this matter of tremendous importance to our school system community. If you have any questions regarding this correspondence, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



James L. Doolan, President
Board of Education of Carroll County

C: Superintendent Stephen H. Guthrie
Dr. Michele Guyton, State Board Member
Dr. Jack Smith, Interim State Superintendent
Edmund O'Meally, Counsel
file