



June 7, 2017

Alliance for a Progressive Virginia Policy Director Scott Price's statement to the press on the proposed Education Compact for Richmond Public Schools.

Our city is at a crucial moment in its history. Remarkable opportunities may await us in the future if we make good choices, but today we face grave issues that must be dealt with. As a community, we cannot move forward without a strong educational base on which to grow and it is up to us as citizens to engage with our elected officials towards this end. We owe this to our children and to their children.

I want to make a few quick points that I hope echo my colleagues here today regarding the issue of the Education Compact.

Firstly, we are troubled by the lack of transparency in the process that produced the current document. The closed-door meetings and undisclosed correspondences between a small number of officials that have produced the Compact have not allowed for the kind of public input such an important decision requires. In light of this issue we request a much more open and publically deliberative process be used if such a compact is even to be entertained.

Secondly, we do not understand the emphasis on the adoption of the Education Compact over the much more urgent need to find a new Superintendent for the RPS. We worry that the adoption of such language in advance, may in fact hamper our city's efforts to find a superior candidate.

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We are uneasy that the document we have seen seems to be based on similar compacts adopted by cities like Denver and Miami which have since seen a marked swerve towards the use of private contractors. We are deeply concerned that in the era of Trump and his Secretary of Education, this document does nothing to safeguard the RPS from efforts to introduce the kind of expensive, and ultimately unproductive privatization schemes that are so in vogue in today's Washington. Such schemes are a red-herring that will only divert us from addressing the significant problems facing our public schools.

Finally, while we expect and welcome input from all quarters on these important issues, we are troubled that other elected officials are going beyond their mandate in actively seeking to set education policy in the city. The involvement of the Mayor's office and City Council in crafting the so called Strategic Academic Plan, while perhaps good intentioned, is inappropriate. The task of the Council and of the executive branch is to deal with matters of funding a budget and providing for capital improvements, not setting policy, that is properly the job of the elected School Board and their appointed superintendent.

Considering these concerns, we are here today to ask that we put a hold on any further actions regarding the Education Compact, at least until a Superintendent is hired and a fuller public vetting of the issue can occur. Too often our city has rushed into poor decisions, made in haste and behind closed doors. Our children's future is too important to make this kind of mistake again.

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