

Re: Ad Hoc Joint City Schools Facility Investment Task Force

Madam Chairwoman and Task Force Members

October 6, 2017

As a city taxpayer, as well as parent of TC Williams graduates, I am writing you reluctantly to express my concern about the capacity of the Alexandria school system to efficiently and effectively carry out the proposed 10-year capital improvement program. While I agree with the necessity to renovate and upgrade schools, as well as address the serious and growing overcapacity problems facing ACPS, I also know from experience working with the school system that they lack the processes, controls and experienced staff to effectively implement a program of any scale. The staff turnover in facilities and finance has been nearly 100% over the last five years; little institutional memory exists, and while the current team may be working their best, most appear to lack support, skills, or perhaps experience to effectively manage projects, although a few are terrific and seem to “make things happen”.

I work for a firm doing business with ACPS; many invoices are not being paid on time. One took four months to process. Documentation for all the school facilities is incomplete, resulting in wasted time, mistakes and redos. Without a thorough audit to identify problems and corrective action, I lack confidence that a massive capital program can be managed efficiently. The size of the capital budget is not my issue – as a taxpayer I am willing to keep our schools funded, and acknowledge a great need – but this proposed massive expansion is simply more than ACPS can manage, in my view.

I hope the Task Force will look closely at the staff capacity, along with the capital needs and funding, as part of their analysis. What good is a grand plan if it can't be executed well?

I am not signing this because I don't want to lose my job.