

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Suit Filed Against Fairfax County School Board in Vote to Close Clifton Elementary

School Board's Transgressions "too great to ignore", Supporters Seek Transparency

Fairfax County, VA – Monday, August 9, 2010 – Aggrieved by the targeted closure of Clifton Elementary School, parents, with the support of taxpayers and residents from around the County, filed a lawsuit Friday against the School Board in Fairfax County's Circuit Court.

The action against the School Board comes after nearly a year of debate centering around whether Clifton Elementary, one of the County's highest performing elementary schools, was 'worthy' of renovation.

With support from Friends of Community Schools (FCS), a private nonprofit organization committed to preserving community schools as anchors for the benefit of their entire community, the plaintiffs are *represented by Patton Boggs LLP, a highly-regarded public policy law firm headquartered in Washington, D.C.* Patton Boggs' filing alleges on behalf of the plaintiffs that the School Board exceeded its authority, acted arbitrarily and capriciously, and abused its discretion.

Friday's filing refutes the credibility of the data by Fairfax County Public School Staff, including declining enrollment, water issues and renovation costs due to 'topography' as reasons for closure, as well as the process the Board followed in closing the school.

"This community worked through every issue on the table, providing reasonable and fiscally prudent alternatives, including historic designation assistance offered by The National Trust for Historic Preservation, access to federal grants – even an offer to bypass its turn in the renovation queue if another school more urgently needs access to funding." said Elizabeth Schultz, an FCS Executive Board Director.

"The School Board had no interest in any solution which resulted in the school remaining open. Geographically representing over 10% of the County, this entire region is now without a single Fairfax County Public School," said Schultz in support of the plaintiffs, "they have willfully turned their backs on this community and it is simply too great of a transgression to ignore."

On July 8th the School Board voted to close the school with *no plan for where the students of Clifton Elementary will attend* upon closure. Advertisement of the school's closure date is being held until the Board's completion of redistricting of South County attendance areas in the Boundary Study slated to begin after the start of the school year.

On Monday, August 2nd, FCS sponsored a community meeting to update Fairfax County residents on the effort to help save Clifton Elementary. Over 100 people, along with elected officials Senator George Barker and Supervisor Pat Herrity, gathered to discuss the effort and options available to save the community school. The *community's overwhelming support to respond to the School Board's actions with litigation* was clear at the meeting.

"It is unfortunate and disappointing that the School Board left the citizens they should be representing with no choice but the legal system. The School Board had an ever-changing 'concern of the day', with scope of renovation and so on, which resulted in decision that was arbitrary and capricious, and failed the citizens of Clifton and Fairfax County", said a supportive Supervisor Herrity.

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