



My Ward Report for September 17, 2019

Dear Fellow East Siders:

I'm writing to provide you with an update concerning the state's proposed takeover of the Providence public schools given the events of last week.

Last Friday, Councilwomen Miller, Kerwin and I testified at the hearing convened by the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) to consider whether the proposed order outlining RIDE's takeover of the Providence schools under the Crowley act should be adopted. We were represented by Sam Zurier, who generously agreed to handle the hearing pro bono.

Our purpose in testifying was twofold. First, we asked RIDE to amend the proposed order to include a transparent and open process similar to the process outlined in Massachusetts's school takeover law (you can read the Mass. law, M.G.L. Part I, Title XII, Chapter 69, § 1K, [here](#)). While the Massachusetts law gives the receiver and commissioner of education broad powers to negotiate with the relevant teacher's union and to reconstitute the school district, it also contains a process which includes community involvement and accountability. The RIDE proposed order provides for neither.

Second, I personally testified about the fact that RIDE has not met the requirements of the Crowley Act, specifically the requirement that RIDE has to provide three years of progressive support and intervention prior to a school district takeover. What concerns me the most is that RIDE's proposed order lists a number of programs, initiatives, and strategies that it implemented state-wide, not just in the Providence public schools, and, although the versions of the initiatives that were implemented in Providence failed, RIDE took no further action in response. In other words, there was no government accountability.

Councilwomen Kerwin, Miller, and I absolutely agree that there is an urgent need to improve the Providence school system. We also agree that the City Council, the Mayor, and the School Board have, as institutions, all contributed to the deficient state of the school system. But we firmly believe that the Providence public schools can't be meaningfully improved without all stakeholders engaging in an open and transparent process that provides for community involvement and government accountability.

Regardless of my disagreements with how RIDE is implementing the takeover, in the end, I think we all realize that the best interests of our children are paramount. Therefore, as the takeover process moves forward, I fully intend to do everything I can to help it succeed. I am looking forward to learning the results of the financial analysis the Commissioner recently ordered so that I can help determine how the City Council can be part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

Sincerely,

Steven Anthony