



Office of the School Board 2110 Washington Blvd. • Arlington, Virginia 22204

Monique O’Grady
School Board Organizational Meeting – July 1, 2019

I would like to first thank my colleagues for trusting me to serve as the School Board vice chair this year. Mr. Goldstein and Ms. Van Doren – thank you for the kind words in nominating me; and thank you Dr. Kanninen and Chair Talento for your vote of confidence.

Thank you Chair Talento for your collaboration as we prepared to enter our new positions. Your intelligence, depth of knowledge, thoughtfulness, compassion, empathy, organizational skills, keen attention to detail, and most of all selflessness – make you an effective and impressive leader for our community.

To members Goldstein, Kanninen, and Van Doren, I value your kind support over the past year and a half and thank you for welcoming me to the board. I have learned a lot from each of you and look forward to continuing to work with you during this time of change. Mr. Goldstein, I especially appreciate your leadership this year through many processes and challenging decisions that were necessary to move APS forward. And kudos to the school board staff – Melanie, Claudia, and Julie Anne who ensure the work gets done.

I also want to thank Dr. Murphy, the executive leadership team, and whole APS staff for your dedication to our students and families. I know that beyond your day job there is early morning, late night, and weekend work to support our APS students. Thank you for all you do to help APS be the sought-after system it is.

A year ago, I said that as a community we would experience change – little did I know how much change we would be in for.

Change can cause uncertainty and anxiety, but I am confident that if we come together as a community, we can minimize negative outcomes, talk about our priorities and values, and move forward in a way that will benefit our system.

Our new strategic plan offers a roadmap for success. We know where we want to go, and with the community and staff’s input, the board will identify a leader to take us there. Identifying leadership is our top priority, but to move forward it can’t be our only priority.

Throughout this year I hope instruction, not construction, will lead our decisions. That we can find efficiencies in our budget, while receiving the funding needed to support our growing student population; that we can eliminate opportunity gaps that keep students from meeting their full potential, and that we continue to find ways to collaborate with the County Board to make every tax dollar count.

This past year we put work in place to advance that wish list. Our budget includes studies to help us look at costs and compensation. The instructional program pathways project helped us understand what instructional priorities we may want to set as we grow; we funded a chief diversity officer who can help us find where barriers exist to APS success and work on ways to remove them; we will hear the results of our special education program evaluation; and we are partnering with the county to launch an ART bus pilot for high school students – giving some of them the freedom to use public transportation to get to and from school.

As we start a new year, despite this being a time of change, I believe the state of our schools is promising. And I am looking forward to helping deliver on that promise.

