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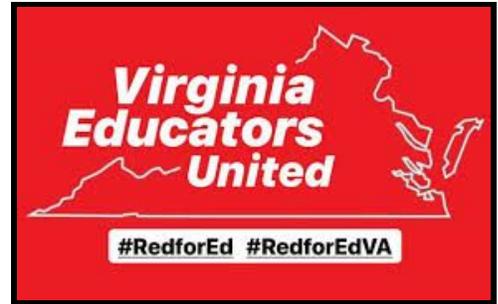
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Virginia Educators United Urges Legislators to Reject Navy Hill Coliseum Funding Bill Proposed by Delegate Bourne

Richmond, VA: Virginia Educators United would like to communicate our strong disappointment in Delegate Jeffrey Bourne for the proposal of HB #1345 to aid in funding the coliseum redevelopment project in Richmond, VA. We encourage all members of the General Assembly who support our public schools to reject this proposal.

The mere announcement by Delegate Bourne that he did not vet the project before proposing the bill should be grounds enough to reject the bill; but unfortunately for our schools, there are much more consequential reasons that we urgently need our representatives to kill this bill.

This bill lends political support to a project that would unequivocally harm Richmond's public schools, and also extends the substantial commitment of public funds to the state level. In addition to providing political cover to a harmful project designed to put profit over public services, the following things remain true about the "Navy Hill" proposal, if passed:

- RPS would lose out on 30 years worth incremental revenue from property tax inflation on properties in the TIF zone, including the highly-valuable Dominion towers.
- The developers have deliberately designed the contract to avoid having to calculate a 'but for' analysis to anticipate what might occur without the project, which leads us to believe those numbers would not support their assertion that the area is 'blighted'.
- RPS would lose state funding for schools because the development will increase city property tax revenues which will decrease Richmond's share of state funding through the calculation of the LCI.
- Should the project fall short of its excessive projections, as any unbiased math proves it will, funding for RPS will be at risk.

- The accelerated redevelopment proposed by the deal is certain to exacerbate rising housing costs and displacement of working-class families, the bulk of the families served by Richmond's public schools.

Suffice to say, RPS will still face unavoidable and significant harm from the Navy Hill project if it should pass; however thanks to Delegate Bourne, state funding for schools is now at risk as well.

We are a group of public school teachers who spend our little free time putting together as strong of a campaign for state school funding as possible. We are fighting desperately for every dollar we can get, and we need every single penny. In a legislature that is crippled by the influence of Dominion's money, it can be a challenge to find representatives who are willing to prioritize our public services. We had hoped that we could look to a former Richmond School Board member to be a champion for education. Instead, Delegate Bourne has circumvented public process and public input, making it his first priority during session to earmark millions of our tax dollars for Dominion Energy's private development project. Polling data shows over 60% opposition to this development project among Richmond residents. Delegate Bourne's first priority should be his constituents, not his wealthiest donors.

Delegate Bourne's actions are a clear illustration of the old "Virginia Way." Delegate Bourne was given \$22,000 by Dominion for a campaign in which he ran unopposed. The company which he became general counsel of in 2018, the Branch Group, was at one time contracted to earn profit from the Navy Hill deal. We have no assurances that this contract will not be reinstated.

This is the type of corruption that has led to public schools that constitute a health emergency and staffing crisis in the first place.

According to House Rule 69, Delegate Bourne should not be permitted to vote on any bill related to Navy Hill, much less be allowed to propose legislation on the project's behalf. It is our hope that our newly elected Speaker of the House, Delegate Eileen Filler-Corn, will enforce this rule. Fixing the corruption of our legislature is essential in the fight for appropriately funded public services. Please say no to corruption, no to callousness, and yes to schools: vote down bill #1345 and demand that Virginia prioritize education.