



Public Charter High School

November 28, 2007

Dear Friend of Thurgood Marshall Academy:

When Thurgood Marshall Academy opened in 2001, I stood on the sidewalk outside our temporary home and watched our first freshman class arrive. I remember that day—and the students and their parents—with wonder and gratitude. It was their commitment, their brave and hopeful decision to help us create TMA, that turned the dream of a handful of Georgetown law students and professors into a school.

With the hopes of that first morning fulfilled beyond all expectations, I have decided to leave Thurgood Marshall Academy for exciting new work on the economic revitalization and redevelopment of Ward 8. I will stay on in my current capacity through the end of this school year and will then spend the summer of 2008 working with TMA's incoming Executive Director to ensure that the transition is a smooth one.

I can't tell you how hard it is for me to leave Thurgood Marshall Academy. This school has been the great love of my working life. I will always be proud and grateful for having been a part of its creation and development.

In every important respect Thurgood Marshall Academy is prepared both for a new leader and for the challenge of setting out toward a new level of achievement. TMA has accomplished much of what the founders set out to do. We have overcome obstacles inherent in any start-up and surmounted a raft of difficulties that are specific to creating from scratch an institution as complex as a college preparatory high school. We have laid strong academic and financial foundations over the last seven years. TMA has become the flagship of secondary education in southeast Washington and is widely acknowledged as one of the best schools in the District. Our students learn in a building that is as beautiful and as well-equipped as any high school in the country. They draw on extensive support services and resources—including hallmark tutoring and mentoring programs. By the time they graduate and join the growing network of TMA collegians, our students have acquired the academic and personal skills to succeed in college and in life.

Building the Thurgood Marshall Academy of today has been the work of seven eventful years and many extraordinary people. Not a day has gone by that I have not felt humbled by the enormous contributions of all of the people who have made our school successful.

First and foremost among the creators of Thurgood Marshall Academy are the loving and committed families of our students. They paid this school the honor of sending their children to

us to be educated. There is no more emphatic contribution to TMA's development than the gift of a child's future. I am deeply thankful for their faith in TMA.

I feel honored to have had the opportunity to work with our talented and dedicated faculty and administrators. They created a culture of excellence that touches every student. Just as important, they supported our students through the demands of rigorous intellectual growth, nurturing self-belief as much as academic success.

I benefited from the wisdom of other charter school leaders and from the guidance of our regulator, the Public Charter School Board. They kept TMA from reinventing too many wheels and thus enabled us to focus on the changes that really mattered.

I had priceless support from community and political leaders in Ward 8. I could always rely on their commitment to creating a college prep high school to serve their neighborhoods. These leaders made TMA's cause their own and in doing so ensured our success.

I have gained new faith in the ideals of citizenship by watching the partners, associates, and staff of this city's finest law firms model those ideals for our students. These busy individuals have tutored, served as mentors, taught life and work skills, and come to care for our students. In the process, they provided first-hand examples of the transforming value of community service.

I have been entrusted with the resources to accomplish all of these goals by donors and supporters who believed so strongly in the potential of our students that they made exceptional gifts to further our development. It is easy to measure their contributions; without them, TMA would simply not have been able to provide the quality education our students need and deserve.

I have drawn upon the hidden asset without which no organization achieves its goals: an involved and supportive Board of Trustees. Board members past and present have given me invaluable guidance. Thurgood Marshall Academy is successful because they have never faltered in their determination to make our school a place where learning flourishes.

And finally, the last seven years of my life have been deeply enriched by the Thurgood Marshall Academy students, each of whom endorsed our vision for a first-class high school in Ward 8 in the most meaningful way possible: by sticking with TMA's rigorous program in spite of their awareness that easier alternatives existed. I am continually inspired by their individual joys and triumphs, moved by their determination during times of challenge, and awed by their development from unformed freshmen into proud, poised and ambitious college men and women.

I hope that in the coming weeks I will have an opportunity to thank each of you individually for your part in making Thurgood Marshall Academy what it is today. But for now, I hope that you are as proud to be a part of this list as I have been grateful for your help over the years.

My most fervent hope is that you will remain strong supporters of Thurgood Marshall Academy. To my eye, the future of TMA has never looked so bright. The Board of Trustees and I have worked together since late summer to ensure a seamless transition to the next stage in TMA's

growth and development. The Board is committed to a thoughtful search process that I am certain will identify a new Executive Director with the leadership qualities needed to expand and strengthen the dream of making a Thurgood Marshall Academy education second to none.

Thurgood Marshall Academy and I have come a long way since I stood on the sidewalk back in 2001 counting freshmen. I realize now that I wasn't just counting students. I was counting dreams—theirs, mine, yours. And looking back, it's clear that sometimes dreams do come true.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joshua M. Kern". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "K".

Joshua M. Kern  
Co-Founder and President