Testimony before the County Council on The Board of Education's FY 2009 Operating Budget April 7, 2008

Good Evening President Knapp and Members of the County Council. My name is Jane de Winter and I serve as President of the Montgomery County Council of PTAs which represents parents, teachers, and students in schools across the county. On behalf of all MCCPTA members I would like to thank the Council for this opportunity to testify on the Board of Education's FY 2009 Operating Budget. The BOE's adopted FY09 Operating Budget makes notable progress towards the MCCPTA priorities outlined in our FY 2009 Operating Budget Compact and Resolution on FY 2009 Operating Budget Priorities, copies of which are provided with my testimony.

This is unquestionably a difficult budget year given current economic conditions and the additional burdens imposed by absolute and relative decreases in state and federal funding. It is also clear that the next few budget years will be difficult and there will be some tough choices ahead. MCCPTA has consistently supported outcome measurement to rigorously evaluate programs for effectiveness and efficiency.

We know there is talk in some parts of the community regarding budget increases and increases in the number of FTEs over the past few years given the relative flatness of enrollment growth. It is important to note that the majority of these initiatives have been overwhelmingly supported by MCCPTA. In recent years these initiatives have included all day Kindergarten; hours based staffing for special education students; guidance counselors; transition staff; translators; reductions in K-2 class size at focus schools; math and literacy coaches; additional building services workers; middle school reform; reductions in average elementary class size and lowering the caps on maximum class size; and additional activity bus service.

The MCCPTA Operating Budget Compact states that MCPS must focus on raising the academic performance of all students so that all may reach their full potential, no matter where they reside in the county. Many of these initiatives were directed to our most vulnerable students: students who are English language learners; students who receive free and reduced meals; and students needing special education services. In prior generations there may have been people who closed their eyes and wrote off some of these students. Last month, Deputy State Superintendent Ron Peiffer informed the Maryland PTA Board of Directors that the state did not need to provide local systems with funding for the HSA Bridge Program because many of the potential Bridge Program students would drop out anyway. This attitude is unacceptable. The PTA logo states "Every Child, One Voice". We will not

write off any student; we will not go backwards; and we will not support a budget that does not make progress toward the requirements of our budget compact. We are looking to the Council to find a way to keep moving forward in our efforts to meet the needs of every child in the public school system.

The County budget includes other programs and staffing that is important to children including crossing guards, Educational Facilities Officers, and Health Technicians. Linkages to Learning and the George B. Thomas Learning Academy provide valuable support to students. We urge you to keep children in mind as you look at proposed funding for the entire budget.

MCCPTA cluster coordinators will testify tonight and Wednesday and raise specific concerns. Please listen to them and let their thoughts guide you as you make decisions on this budget. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify tonight, and for the time, dedication, and consideration you provide to Montgomery County's students. MCCPTA looks forward to continuing to work with you to secure the funding our children need to succeed and excel in Montgomery County.

Attachments:
MCCPTA FY2009 Operating Budget Compact
MCCPTA Resolution on FY 2009 Operating Budget Priorities
MCCPTA Resolution on Crossing Guards and Educational Facilities Officers