

Northwest Cluster

Northwest High School

Clopper Mill Elementary School

Darnestown Elementary School

Diamond Elementary School

Germantown Elementary School

Kingsview Middle School

Great Seneca Creek Elementary School

Lakelands Park Middle School (shared)

Ronald McNair Elementary School

Roberto Clemente Middle School (shared)

Spark M. Matsunaga Elementary School

Operating Budget Testimony

to the County Council

April 16, 2009

Good Evening President Andrews and Council Members. I'm Susan Burkinshaw, one of the Northwest Cluster Co-Coordinators.

Understanding that as a community we continue to face a very tight fiscal climate, our number one request, as always, is that you prioritize your decisions based on our children's safety, health and educational well-being in their learning environments.

The major concern in our cluster includes student safety in and around our Cluster schools, particularly at Northwest High School. As such, it is imperative that staffing levels not be cut, particularly in areas of public safety and security—not only in Germantown, but also across the county.

Pedestrian safety continues to be a concern across our cluster, and staffing in some of our schools is very slim, resulting in large class sizes and high counselor to student ratios.

McNair Elementary School, Lakelands Park MS, and Kingsview MS continue to experience traffic and pedestrian safety concerns. We have requested that authorities come to evaluate these situations, but so far no concerns have been directly addressed.

We testified last year about Lakelands Park MS and the lack of traffic controls at the intersection in front of the school. With over 50% of this school's population

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as walkers, this continues to be a problem with no relief in site. To date no child has been injured, although there have been many close calls.

There are concerns about staffing levels in many of our schools. In particular, Darnestown Elementary has increasingly large class sizes—creative staffing is allowing them to function, but not without challenges.

At Matsunaga Elementary/Longview School, students are not receiving the same counseling program that other children in the county are experiencing. With 960 Matsunaga students and 52 Longview students on site, Matsunaga has only a single counselor to support all of those children. If there would be any way to rectify that situation, they would be most appreciative—especially during these turbulent economic times when children can't help but feel the stresses of their parents.

We urge you to consider ways to navigate through this budget without cutting personnel positions. The trickle down effect is felt not only in the immediate school community where the positions are cut, but also in our greater community—families impacted by job loss lose the ability to adequately support themselves, are less able to support the local economy with decreased local spending, contributing to lower sales tax and income tax revenues for our greater community.

Please be responsible with staffing, particularly when it comes to the education and safety of our children. These are times when we cannot afford to skimp on the education of our children—we must help them build a strong foundation on which to support their lives.

Our children are our future and now, more than ever, we can't afford to fall behind.

Respectfully submitted by:
Susan Burkinshaw and Bob Murphy, 2008-9 Northwest Cluster Co-Coordinators