

Magruder Cluster Operating Budget Testimony January 12 2011-01-12

Good evening President Barclay, Superintendent Weast and members of the Board of Education. I am Patrick Dunn and serve with Annie Ahmed and Beatrice Hanson as the Magruder Cluster PTA coordinators. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening.

The Magruder Cluster fully supports the MCCPTA Operating Budget Priorities as expressed in the testimony of Kristin Tribble which highlight our guiding principles for the continuing success of our children.

We fully support the Board's position that a Maintenance of Effort budget is not only a good idea, it's the law. We are and will continue to make this point to the County Council. The Montgomery County education system is a driving factor in the economic health of this county and state and investments in education are one of the best performing government activities.

Given the poor economic forecasts and the loss of supplemental funding, we acknowledge that the funding resources may not support a MoE budget and ask that you use a balanced approach that protects the Operating Budget Priorities in your continuing efforts to find cost saving measures that have the least impact on instruction.

The Magruder cluster shares the concerns expressed by many others that ensuring a safe and healthy school environment is a necessary precondition for effective learning. Maintaining an effective partnership with county offices to promote safety and health will continue to be a focus of our interest and advocacy.

MCPS produces an exemplary education product and we thank our teachers, staff, and administration for that. MCPS is dealing with an increasingly diverse student community and the need for academic intervention teachers for reading, math, and language comprehension is increasing. We encourage you to continue your ongoing efforts to improve your education services for all students and note that efforts to share best practices among teaching professionals are a strong indicator of continuing growth. The efforts to enhance the outcome of Advanced Placement test scores by students across the county are one example. As noted in the Budget Priorities, effective roll out of curriculum updates requires staff development and the availability of updated teaching and assessment materials.

The work of the BoE and MCPS to reduce costs and effectively compensate their employees must continue to be highlighted and made easily accessible so that we, as advocates, can work effectively. By what means can MCPS and BoE lead the county and state wide efforts to maximize the effective use of taxpayer resources while providing the excellent service that the citizenry expect? Effectively responding to competing arguments for funding allocation requires us to have access to the facts.

The Magruder cluster has worked closely with the Board over the years. We believe there is a mutual respect and from proven past experience, we believe that each of you has the best interests of the children in mind when making decisions. We will continue to advocate at the county and state level for adequate education funding and look forward to working with you in meeting the current fiscal issues and continuously improving the education of our children.