

**Written Testimony of
Kathleen Lloyd
On Behalf of the
Gaithersburg Cluster**

**Montgomery County Board of Education
January 11, 2012**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on behalf of the Gaithersburg cluster concerning the Superintendent's Recommended Fiscal Year 2013 Operating Budget.

We appreciate that Dr. Starr is not proposing further reductions to the Operating Budget, in the area of school-based staff, but we have to recognize that where we are is not where we need to be. Current staffing levels need to be increased in our schools in order to ensure student success.

We know that we are in the midst of difficult financial times, but we must look beyond this immediate Operating Budget. We ask that you consider the needs of our Cluster now, so that they can be met in future budget years.

The Gaithersburg Cluster is continuing to see a high Mobility rate and continued increases in FARMS, and ESOL rates. Our numbers in these areas consistently exceed the county averages. Due to our high percentages in these areas, additional staffing is necessary in order to meet the needs of these students.

Schools	2011-2012						2010-2011		
	Total Enrollment	Two or more races %	Black or Afr. Amer. %	Asian%	Hispanic %	White %	FARMS%*	ESOL%**	Mobility Rate%***
Gaithersburg HS	2046	3.3%	26.5%	10.1%	37.6%	22.2%	36.5%	6.1%	14.4%
Forest Oak MS	788	5.1%	25.4%	9.9%	41.2%	18.1%	49.4%	9.3%	15.2%
Gaithersburg MS	657	5.8%	24.7%	7.6%	32.1%	29.7%	37.9%	6.4%	12.9%
Gaithersburg ES	656	2.6%	20.0%	5.6%	64.9%	6.9%	75.0%	42.8%	21.6%
Goshen ES	617	6.8%	25.9%	13.0%	26.7%	27.1%	34.3%	22.2%	13.3%
Laytonsville ES	457	7.4%	10.9%	8.5%	10.7%	62.4%	10.6%	4.6%	8.2%
Rosemont ES	522	6.1%	23.0%	10.0%	44.4%	15.9%	57.1%	39.1%	20.3%
Strawberry Knoll ES	545	3.3%	30.6%	14.3%	34.9%	16.5%	44.9%	21.8%	13.2%
Summit Hall ES	536	2.6%	24.8%	4.5%	63.2%	4.1%	79.7%	49.6%	19.3%
Washington Grove ES	394	3.8%	15.7%	11.2%	55.8%	12.9%	73.7%	57.4%	12.6%
Elementary Cluster Total	3727	4.6%	22.1%	9.5%	43.5%	19.9%	53.4%	33.2%	15.8%
Elementary County Total	70136	4.9%	20.3%	14.3%	28.0%	32.3%	35.2%	22.0%	12.6%

Six of our seven elementary schools are "Class-size Reduction" (CSR) schools due to their high FARMS rates. Unfortunately, CSR only ensures reduced class sizes in grades K-2. Our grade 3-5 class sizes in many of our elementary schools are too large. We see numbers as high as 29 – 30 students in those classrooms. This is not a healthy learning environment.

Staff Development is a crucial position at our schools and cuts to this area have been felt hard. There is no way a .4 Staff Development Teacher can do the job of a full time Staff Development Teacher. Again, our schools are being asked to maintain the level of work that has always been done with fewer resources. Staff development is a critical element of student gains. We must continue to build the capacity of our people and remain focused on teaching and learning.

Due to the reduction of staff development allocation in last year's budget, one of our schools opted to reduce the media center specialist and school counselor to part time positions - in order to maintain a full-time allocation for staff development. In making this decision, the students at this school are losing out on reading and learning opportunities as well as guidance for problem solving, health and safety. No principal should ever be put in this position.

With other staffing reductions, safety is again a concern, due to the lack of an appropriate number of lunch/recess aides. At some schools, there are times when only 1 staff member is monitoring 86 kids on the playground at recess. This is not a "safe" environment for our kids. Some schools have to resort to pulling paraeducators out of the classroom to cover recess duty. Having too few adults on the playground is dangerous. Having too little staff support in the classroom is detrimental as well.

It's true that our wish list is large and our pocketbooks are small. Finding the means to meet the needs will not be easy. But just as a parent should do anything to help their own children, we are called to do everything possible for all children. MCPS is renowned for the high educational standards it sets for all its students. We are proud of that fact and insist on keeping that our focus. Let's find a way to ensure a bright MCPS future for every child in our schools.