

Good evening members of the Board of Education, and Superintendent Starr. My name is Donna Lowell and tonight I am here to testify on behalf of the Poolesville Cluster schools on the FY 2013 Capital Budget and Capital Improvements Program.

Listen to the good news. We celebrate both Monocacy Elementary and Poolesville Elementary School's 50th Anniversaries, and Poolesville High Schools 100th Anniversary. Also, we are happy to note that PHS ranked the number #1 High School in the State of Maryland and #64 in the United States.

Now learn about the bad news. Poolesville High School (PHS) is not set to be modernized until 2021. The current school was built to serve the Poolesville Cluster's middle and high school populations in the 50's, and did so until 1997 when John Poole Middle was built. Since it was built for a different population of students (younger so smaller and less of them) the classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, gym, cafeteria and auditorium are much too small. The auditorium has a capacity of 458 (38% of the student body). For any school assembly that means multiple sessions. The elementary schools can't even have an event at PHS without there being standing room only. The cafeteria can only handle 18% of the student body.

The original FACT report was completed in 1990's prior to the inclusion of the magnet program when PHS was projected to be modernized in 2010. The school's population since then has increased by 50%. The new projections put the modernization date at 2021. This will be well beyond the 50 year cycle for high school modernizations. The FACT report doesn't show that the 1978 "patchwork" modernization did not touch many of the classrooms. It was more of an addition adding an auditorium, a gymnasium and a new brick façade which is now falling apart. This addition was completed to provide PHS students with equal facilities to other students in the county. So much of the school hasn't changed since 1953.

We had hoped that since the school was assessed almost two decades ago that schools that haven't started being modernized could be reevaluated. Since this is not slated to happen we just ask please keep the modernizations on track. PHS needs to be modernized. It is an embarrassment that Maryland's #1 High School is so antiquated.

We have other concerns that we would like addressed prior to the modernizations. The main ones that must be dealt with is the need for security cameras outside of the school which could have thwarted the

recent vandalism. There are also safety issues including classrooms without windows. This allows only one way out in case of an emergency. Finally there are ADA compliance issues at the school. There is only one entrance to the school which is handicap accessible. Someone that needs to use these ramps must travel around more than half of the school to get to the other building. This sidewalk is not covered so in inclement weather it is quite unpleasant. Not all of the bathrooms are handicap accessible which means depending on where your classrooms are located how easy and quickly you can get to a bathroom.

Moving next to our newest school, John Poole Middle school has two immediate needs a track around the field and secondly an equipment shed outside needs to be enlarged. The current shed doesn't have the capacity to even hold the new equipment.

Finally our elementary schools - Poolesville Elementary school recently received its FACT score. We have some concerns over the FACT report itself. Some of the data that went into the FACT report is over 10 years old. The radon test seemed to be an outdoor reading based on EPA levels which doesn't address the issue of the indoor air quality. Also, the HVAC system is unreliable. We also need new technology including Promethean boards for each of our classrooms.

Monocacy Elementary school has in inconsistent HVAC system.

Our elementary school children are surrounded by technology except at school. Technology supports the successful implementation of Curriculum 2.0. We lack it. We need it.

We still remain concerned about the enrollment issues within the cluster and want all four of our schools to remain open. They are the hub of our rural community. Thus we want to continue to allow the voluntary transfers from outside the cluster, without MCPS provided transportation. We would also like to see MCPS tap into grants for agriculture programs, which would promote agriculture and its future in the county through education, beyond simply establishing a land reserve.

We also recommend that the BOE consider modifying the language in the Facility Planning Objectives in Chapter 3, to clearly state that schools that draw enrollment from the development restricted Agricultural reserve are not held to the same preferred ranges of enrollment. We are asking the Board to initiate a process to develop a

realistic policy that establishes enrollment guidelines in line with the zoning and land use confines of the Reserve. We need to differentiate the schools in the Agriculture Reserve from the rest of the county. We are very unique and easily overlooked.

As a cluster we continue to support Board of Education efforts to balance MCPS construction priorities and place modernizations at the same or higher level of priority consideration with additions. Health and safety issues in our facilities must continue to receive the highest priority.

Please see the two attachments. Attachment A is the full list of all the needs at our cluster schools. Attachment B is the Fact Report Response for Poolesville Elementary School.

On behalf of the families from across Montgomery County whose students attend the Poolesville Cluster schools, we thank you for the opportunity to come before you tonight and share the priorities of our cluster.