

TESTIMONY
Before the Board of Education
On the FY2013 Operating Budget
January 18, 2012

Wootton High School Cluster

Wootton H.S.; Cabin John M.S.; Robert Frost M.S.; Cold Spring E.S.;
Dufief E.S.; Fallsmead E.S.; Lakewood E.S.; Stone Mill E.S.; Travilah E.S.

Richard S. Edelman, Co-Cluster Coordinator

1. Good evening. I am Richard Edelman, a Co-Cluster Coordinator for the Wootton Cluster.

2. As always, we want to thank the members of the Board, our administrators, teachers and staff for their time and commitment to making our school system the high quality system that it is. We especially appreciate the efforts of MCPS employees for their hard work, commitment to education and support for our children in this difficult environment, where they have been asked to make sacrifices each year for several years now.

3. We endorse the MCCPTA operating budget compact and list of priorities. And given the circumstances, we support the Superintendent's proposed operating budget. We do so knowing that this budget will continue a situation where our schools and quality of education in the County have been hurt by effective cuts in funding in recent years, and then by the County Council's failure to fund MCPS at the maintenance of effort level for this year.

4. As is the case for schools across the County, the impact of the cuts has been real and directly felt in our schools. Wootton, Cabin John and Frost have lost teaching and other staff positions, and our elementary schools have lost assistant principals, and seen reductions in reading specialists, media specialists, and para-educators. For example, Wootton has lost 9 full time positions (7 teaching positions) over the last 3 years while the student population in an already overcrowded school remains the same. Frost has had a net loss of nearly 3 teacher positions, a staff development position, and most of a media specialist position and a special education position over the last three years. DuFief has a split 4th/5th grade class, lost an Assistant Principal position (in a school with over 40 Learning Center students) and lost half a reading specialist position and half a media specialist position. Fallsmead was staffed for a split 1st/2nd grade class and

has had to deploy its reading initiative teachers to help out the 2nd grade which means reading classes are overcrowded. Travilah lost para-educator positions and half a reading specialist position and RICA is slated to lose 2 teachers and 2 ½ paraeducator positions.

5. I have been involved with MCCPTA for nearly 20 years and it seems to me that we have not only rolled back the staffing increases from the early 2000s, we have also lost the positions that had been restored in the late 90s after the cuts in the early 90s -all at a time when the school system is much larger and the student population is more diverse and complex. The questions are where will the reductions stop? And will we still have the sort of excellent school system the County has long had.

6. At a recent meeting held at our Cluster with State Senators and Delegates, many parents expressed concern that their children would not get the same quality of education that they received when they were students; or that their young children would not have the same educational experience as their older children. Many were worried that our schools would suffer long term harm and that MCPS would not continue to be recognized as an excellent school system. Some noted articles that described Montgomery County as losing ground to Fairfax County, and cited the decreased funding for our schools as contributing to that perception.

7. But we recognize that it is simply unrealistic to seek restoration of the cuts that have been made in the last several years.

8. That said, our Cluster submits that we now have to hold the line. We urge the Board to adopt the Superintendent's proposed budget and to advocate for funding at the maintenance of effort level.

9. Last year, members of the Council expressed exasperation with the Board, MCPS, MCCPTA and specifically our Cluster over advocacy for even a budget somewhat below maintenance of effort but above what the Council ultimately provided. But, now that the Council has hit the reset button and established a new maintenance of effort level, we should all hold the Council responsible for maintaining the trajectory of funding from that new level that the Council itself set.

10. I want to assure you that we in the Wootton Cluster will do our part. Last year we provided the Council with petitions signed by over 300 people in just

about 10 days before our Council testimony that supported adequate funding for MCPS. We are committed to more active advocacy and greater demonstrations of citizen support for adequate funding for our schools this year. We have also spoken to and written to elected officials at the State level asking them to maintain State financial support for our schools, and we will continue that advocacy.

11. Thank you again for all you do for our schools and let's hope that next year we can talk about beginning to restore funding for some of the programs and staffing levels that were cut.