

Cold Spring Elementary School-DuFief Elementary School
Fallsmead Elementary School-Lakewood Elementary School
Stone Mill Elementary School-Travilah Elementary School
Cabin John Middle School-Robert Frost Middle School
Thomas S. Wootton High School

**Testimony to the Montgomery County Public School
Board of Education
By Karen Collishaw, MCCPTA Wootton Cluster
November 10, 2011**

Good evening, I am Karen Collishaw, Wootton Cluster Co-Coordinator.

First of all, we parents recognize that in the current economic climate, it may be impossible to fulfill every legitimate capital improvement need that exists. However, we regretfully have concluded that we cannot support the proposed FY 2013 Capital Improvement Budget or the FY 2013-18 Capital Improvements Program. Of paramount concern to our Cluster is the continued overcrowding at Wootton HS. As we've noted repeatedly over the last several years, this is not a new issue—Wootton has been over capacity by 250-350+ students and hosted ten portable classrooms for many years now. Furthermore, that burden is expected to continue into the foreseeable future, with projected capacity running from 108 to 111 percent over the next six years. Delaying the modernization is not acceptable to the Wootton community.

Although we cannot support the current recommendations, there is some variability in our reaction to elements of the plan. We are specifically grateful that the Superintendent's request includes for the first time both Cold Spring and DuFief Elementary Schools on the list for modernization. While a dubious honor, we note that they were assigned the two highest Facilities Assessment with Criteria and Testing (FACT) scores.

We also are thankful that the proposal retains the planned restroom renovations (affecting Cold Spring and Travilah ESs). And finally, we are pleased Cold Spring ES's new gymnasium is on track for completion by August 2012. Other county wide projects, such as HVAC updates, are critical as well. It's recently been reported that crews had to repeatedly evaluate and fix Fallsmead ES's HVAC system on a weekly basis for over three months starting this summer.

And while we are appreciative of the Planned Life-cycle Replacement (PLAR) Projects completed in the summer of 2011 at Wootton (e.g., refurbished track, acoustic panels), the continued overcrowding means that we're relying on the best behavior of the students each and every day as they navigate packed hallways, a cafeteria that can hold less than a third of our student body, and cramped and outdated athletic, music and theater facilities. It is our concern that this continued congestion will begin to affect what the children are able to learn in the facility.

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We're one of 13 clusters that trigger the Subdivision Staging Policy impact tax. Of interest to the Wootton community is that it appears a portion of the Great Seneca Science Corridor development has been initiated. It was our understanding that a payment to offset the marginal costs the added students generated by the development is due to the school system to assist the affected schools. We believe these funds due from the County should be used to maintain the previously scheduled modernization date of 2018 for Wootton HS.

We join our MCCPTA colleagues in asking you to listen to our plea for more time following November 17 to find a way to keep our modernization on track. While the Wootton Administration has done an incredible job managing the school despite the overcrowding, the school cannot continue this success in the face of continued budget reductions. I'd like to remind the Board that the schools of our cluster have jointly agreed to the philosophy that no community in the cluster should be moved out by a boundary study to make room for students from any new community (see attached communication to Dr. Starr). We all believe this should be dealt with before there are people living in new developments who might go to the Wootton Cluster. Note that we are not trying to push new students to other clusters if they are or will become overcrowded like Wootton. We would simply like the Board of Education and County Council to appreciate that even with the pressure to grow the economy, the impact of new development on existing schools must be recognized and proactively addressed. The cluster offers these principles in an affirmative and constructive spirit and wants to express our willingness to work with the Montgomery County Public School system to prevent a foreseeable problem.

Thank you for the opportunity to bring the Wootton cluster's concerns to your attention.