



The Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations

July 16, 2008

Dr. Jerry Weast, Superintendent
Montgomery County Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Dr. Weast:

This letter is in response to the memorandum of June 20, 2008 regarding commencement locations for June 2009. Parents have been vocal for many years regarding graduation venue and our desire to be involved stakeholders regarding this decision made by our schools.

MCCPTA's concern is the timing of this memo to the high schools and their subsequent ability to effectively reach out to parents and students over the summer months. While the June 20th memo from MCPS asks each identified school to gather and use stakeholder input, what number within groups represented constitute appropriate stakeholder feedback? The act of getting substantive stakeholder input during prime vacation time for our parents and students is a behemoth undertaking for any school. Even good faith efforts such as automated phone calls, mailings, email postings and meetings are most likely not received by many who are away. With no minimum standards given to principals or general guidelines for which "established stakeholder feedback process" is to be achieved, this decision could lie with just input from a couple of parents and/or students.

The June 20th memo instructed that principals should seek stakeholder feedback for both determination of whether to use Comcast Center or if schools wish to change venue and pay the additional cost. In an informal survey that MCCPTA did of PTSA presidents regarding how their schools undertake collecting parent and student input for graduation venue, the responses widely varied from no parent input to the active use of several communication methods to reach out to their community. The best way to ensure that stakeholders are truly involved in this important decision is to make this information available while school is in session so that it could be effectively shared with all in the school community.

MCCPTA is glad to see that this year's graduating class figures include projected Grade 12 special education students. Unfortunately, we are disappointed that MCPS chose not to use this year's September enrollment figures instead of using March's numbers. The September enrollment data would give an accurate picture of which schools have the largest graduating classes. We do recognize that this would delay school notification of locations and dates, but we believe it would give school communities the most accurate picture about which four schools have the largest graduating classes and are eligible to use the Comcast Center. This also ensures a time frame for MCPS to gather stakeholder input when all stakeholders are available.

An appropriate amount of stakeholder input is needed when addressing this issue. We ask that MCPS redefine this process and address ongoing concerns as it relates to graduation venues.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Romero". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

President

cc. Nancy Navarro, President Montgomery County Board of Education
Mr. Stephen Bedford, Chief of School Performance
Sharon St. Pierre, Chair, MCCPTA High School Committee