



March 9, 2009

Honorable Martin O'Malley
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Governor O'Malley:

I am writing on behalf of the Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA). MCCPTA is a volunteer organization representing over 50,000 parents, teachers and students in Montgomery County. Our mission is to support and speak on behalf of children and youth in the schools, in the community, and before governmental agencies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children; to assist parents in developing the skills they need to raise and protect children; and to encourage parent and public involvement in the public schools of the nation.

We greatly appreciate the high priority you have placed on education in Maryland public schools. Maryland earned its #1 ranking from *Education Week* through a history of consistent dedication to the educational opportunities of our students. We all are proud of that heritage and we all want to maintain those high standards in years to come. We thank you for including full funding of the GCEI and teacher pension plans in your latest budget proposals. We also thank you for reversing the proposed cuts in supplemental grant and non-public placement funding for special needs children.

I am writing to urge you also to devote additional funding to support school maintenance and repair projects and energy-efficient new school construction. MCCPTA recently adopted a resolution supporting the Montgomery County Board of Education's FY 2010 Capital budget. That budget calls for us to spend \$200 million to build additions, modernize schools and perform critical maintenance and renewal projects such as HVAC replacements, roof repairs, and a systemic replacement of assets as they exceed their useful life cycle. We are planning to complete the vast majority of this with our own resources – over 80 percent of the required funding will come directly from the citizens and revenues of Montgomery County. However, neither we nor other counties in the state can do what is needed to provide safe, secure and modern school facilities without state aid for construction and modernizations. For your convenience, attached is the testimony we gave last month before the House Appropriations Committee on School Construction.

The Board of Education's budget calls for \$40 million in state aid this year. We urge you to explore ways to use funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to

support these critical activities. Many of the planned capital projects will provide needed maintenance and repair of HVAC systems, roofs and restrooms, among other things. In addition, new schools and modernizations of existing schools will be built to energy-efficient LEED standards. As you saw when you visited Great Seneca Creek Elementary School, the first LEED-certified public school in Maryland, the features we are employing in new construction will reduce the energy load of our schools, saving us operating funds and lowering the burden on our environment. We understand that the ARRA permits expenditures for these purposes. We urge you to examine opportunities to supplement the school construction budget with funding from these sources.

When you visited our area to tour a water main break in late December you emphasized the importance of “investing in the things our parents and grandparents built for us.” This sentiment applies equally to the importance of investing in school infrastructure as well. We hope you will provide adequate funding for our school construction and maintenance projects.

Sincerely,

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

Kay Romero
MCCPTA President

cc: Sen. Mike Miller, President of the Senate
Del. Michael Busch, Speaker of the House
Comptroller Peter Franchot, Board of Public Works
Treasurer Nancy K. Kopp, Board of Public Works



The Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations

House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Education and Economic Development
Public School Construction
Annapolis, MD
February 19, 2009

I am Kay Romero, President of the Montgomery County Council of PTAs. We represent over 50,000 parents and more than 139,000 students in the county.

We appreciate the commitment you have made to public education this year and in years past. If we are to maintain Maryland's top-ranked public school system, we need to continue to invest in our schools, now and in the future. We urge you to approve the Governor's recommended amount for aid to school construction projects statewide.

Montgomery County, like many counties in our state, faces a growing and increasingly diverse student population. Student enrollment rose by more than 1,500 students this year and we are expecting record kindergarten classes for several years to come. Our African American, Hispanic and Asian American populations are growing rapidly: Collectively, they now represent over 60 percent of the students in our county schools. Our students speak over 132 different languages at home.

The County's six year CIP budget includes 22 school additions scheduled to bring 229 additional classrooms to our county. It also includes 31 planned modernizations, 18 of which will be completed in the six year period. In addition, we have a number of countywide programs designed to repair and replace HVAC systems, fix aging roofs, upgrade restrooms, enable planned replacements of key assets and construct facility improvements to accommodate educational programs at our schools. Our local budget calls for \$200 million in spending this year, over 80 percent of which is to be funded solely with county funds.

However, we, like other county school systems, cannot maintain our buildings and accommodate our growing population without state construction aid. Our local leaders are doing all they can to keep pace, but they must have your support as well. \$260 million is critical to ensuring that we can continue to provide our students with safe, secure and modern learning facilities. We fully support the Governor's request.

MCCPTA also supports the testimony given on behalf of Maryland PTA by Laura Carr, VP for Legislation, regarding funding for the Aging Schools Program. It is crucial to maintain safe, healthy learning environments for all children across our state.

Thank you.

Kay Romero
President, Montgomery County Council of PTAs