

Northwood Cluster FY 2010 CIP Testimony

My name is Mary Abe and I am speaking on behalf of the Northwood cluster this evening. My involvement with Northwood High School began on a program planning committee in the summer of 2001, and I am excited to report that in its fifth year of operation, Northwood High School is beginning to be the school that we dreamed of when we met in a dilapidated science classroom with a noisy window air conditioner. That classroom is refurbished and the window unit has been replaced with central air. Most of the Northwood building and grounds are acceptable in appearance and function and we are delighted that our students, staff and visitors can enter and exit safely onto University Boulevard thanks to the installation of a new half light and construction of a new traffic pattern into and out of the school. We thank the Board for all of the support that you have given Northwood parents as we advocated to bring our children's high school up to modern standards.

After playing facilities catch up for four years, the Northwood community anxiously awaits the completion of the current stage of renovations in the summer of 2009. With the completion of ongoing projects including phase 2 of the changes to our traffic and parking areas, renewal of our performing arts spaces in support of our Musical Theater Academy program, final restroom renovations and replacement of old doors and keys to a common system, Northwood's extended renovation will be finished. We support the planned expansion of our Wellness Center in conjunction with Department of Health and Human Services which will also address unimproved technology rooms at Northwood. The glaring omission in the reopening of Northwood will then be our 1950's era gyms and locker rooms. The inequities between our facilities for girls and boys are a continuing embarrassment when we host sporting events. We will continue to ask that these facilities be brought up to the standards of a modern Montgomery County high school.

We are convinced that well maintained schools which students are proud to attend have a strong effect on academic performance. The three middle schools in our cluster: Col. E. Brooke Lee, Silver Spring International and Sligo Middle Schools, all suffer from the chronic problems of schools in aging buildings with no hope of renovation during the school career of any child currently living in Montgomery County. Col. E. Brooke Lee which was built in 1966 has been assessed for modernization but will not be modernized until after 2021. Children born in 2010 will be entering middle school before the school is modernized. Silver Spring International (housed in the old Blair High School building) and Sligo are not even being assessed for modernization. We strongly support

countywide programs which address HVAC replacement, restroom renovation, additional security cameras, roof replacement and planned life cycle asset replacement which allow these schools to receive desperately needed renovations without waiting for full modernization. Our schools have benefitted from these programs in the past and Sligo Creek Elementary School has an immediate need for air conditioner replacement.

We support the MCPS initiative to continue to eliminate relocatable classrooms to the greatest extent possible. We are pleased to support the boundary study which is designed to relieve crowding at Sligo Creek Elementary School and look forward to the feasibility study for a classroom addition to Highland View Elementary School. Highland View continues to suffer from excessive dampness resulting in problems with air quality and mold. A major contributor to this problem is the so-called “dirt” room which we have raised to your attention in the past. We trust that any planned construction at Highland View will also address this ongoing problem.

The Northwood cluster has much to celebrate in facilities from the opening of Arcola Elementary School to the restoration of the Wayne Avenue facade of Silver Spring International Middle School. As public school supporters, it is very important to us that our schools be good neighbors and community centers. Well maintained facilities are a key to this goal and we cannot afford to fall behind in providing high quality facilities to our students. We appreciate the opportunity to share our facility issues with you this evening.

Thank you.

-Northwood Cluster Coordinators – Mary Abe and Jennifer Chambers