TESTIMONY

Before the Board of Education
On the FY2011 Operating Budget

January 20, 2010

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. The Wootton Cluster appreciates the opportunity to be heard on the proposed FY 2011 Operating Budget. We recognize that the Board, MCPS and everyone involved in the school system again face very difficult choices in MCPS' operating funds request for the upcoming school year as we attempt to maintain the quality of our schools in an extremely challenging fiscal environment.

2. There is, of course, much that we do not know, so it is hard for us to speak with any certainty at the moment. Based on what we know now, we support the Superintendent's proposed budget as reasonable in the circumstances that we face; especially given the cuts that were made last year and the additional cuts that have already been made this year. The Superintendent has described his proposal as a "maintenance of effort" budget, and we believe that is certainly an accurate characterization of the proposal.

3. At the MCCPTA Operating Budget forum earlier this month, Board and Council members said that they will be looking to us for feedback on priorities if some of the worse case revenue scenarios do occur. We hope that it does not come to that; but we understand that it might. As I mentioned at the forum, given how much we do not know at this time, we are hard pressed to give you much feedback now, and we hope we will have additional opportunities to engage with MCPS on priorities as the revenue situation becomes more clear.

4. What we can say at this time is that we concur in the MCCPTA Operating Budget and we endorse the statement of general Operating Budget priorities adopted by MCCPTA. We feel we can not at this time take definitive positions regarding the non-recommended cuts appended to the proposed budget. However, our Cluster representatives believe that, among the non-recommended cuts, reductions in academic intervention teachers, special program teachers, counselors, building service workers, focus and reading teachers and para-educators would be the most problematic. There were reductions in personnel in these areas last year and we believe that many of our more vulnerable students would be truly hurt if there were additional cuts in these areas next year. There was also concern about potential reductions in funding for

transportation to special programs; for many of the students who participate in those programs elimination of transportation means that they will be unable to participate in these programs.

5. I want to again note that Wootton High School remains seriously overcrowded and this creates need for additional operating funds for the school; ranging from teachers, to guidance counselors, to maintenance staff, to security staff.

6. In this regard we want to ask that the Board to maintain funding for staffing in support of the College Institute program at Wootton. As you know, this program allows students to leave the school to take college level classes at the Shady Grove campus. I recognize that given the circumstances we face, some looking for items to cut might view this program as a luxury. And I recognize that MCPS will be reconsidering many worthwhile programs. But our request for maintained support for this program rests not only on its academic merits but also on the need of the High School to alleviate its overcrowding. In recent years as many as 150 students have participated in this program, that is 150 students that do not have to be housed at Wootton for part of the day. Last year, administrative staffing for this program was reduced from one and one half positions to half a position; and student participation fell below 100, this Fall it was 79. If we do not hold onto the support we currently have, we cannot maintain the program and our crowding problem will be exacerbated.

7. In my seven years of providing operating budget testimony for the Cluster we have always focused on the general needs of the school system, and I do not recall making funding requests specific to our Cluster. But this year we ask that funding for the College Institute program be maintained; not because we argue that it is more academically worthy than other MCPS programs that are being reviewed for budget priorities, but because of our specific needs to reduce crowding at Wootton High School.

8. Finally, we want you to know that we heard the call of Board and Council members for support in Annapolis, and we will ask parents in our Cluster to contact State legislators to urge them to provide necessary funding for high quality education in our County and in the State.

Thank you for this opportunity to be heard on the FY 2011 budget. We are prepared to engage constructively with the Board as the budget process moves forward.