

Testimony to the Montgomery County Council

April 6, 2010 on behalf of the Gaithersburg High Cluster

Submitted by: Valerie Rivers

I've been thinking about this evening's testimony for some time and really struggling to find a focal point. So I'm going with a general theme in an effort to remind you of the importance of adequate funding for our school system. Communities all over the country have been suffering for years and we are all hoping that we may be we truly starting a recovery. Nearly all of us have had to make tough choices, scale back and take a hard look at how and where we spend money. This has been true in our homes as well as in local, state and federal governments, and of course in our school systems.

As hard as things have been on some communities, it is always especially hard when children "suffer." I put suffer in quotes because what is suffering for one child is certainly not the same for all children. Cutting back on a trip to the mall or a night at the movies is certainly different than missing a meal. But we all realize that we may very well need to "suffer" and accept some changes in our schools.

None of us want cutbacks in our school system, but we all know the realities. Public schools across the country are experiencing a rise in enrollment as the cost of private schools become too much for many parents that previously went that route.

A USA TODAY article on January 6 asked whether the recession could benefit public schools by bringing in a new clientele? One New York University Professor said "In a way, it's a good thing for public schools. It's a good time for public schools to pitch the value they bring to middle-class parents."

Well, MCPS doesn't need to pitch the value to me or to many parents that believe strongly in the public school system. Nothing is perfect but we all know we have one of the best school system's in the country. And we want to make sure it stays that way.

MCPS has been dealing with increases in enrollment at a time when funding is getting more and more difficult. The recommendations before you include cuts that most of us in the Gaithersburg Cluster philosophically oppose, but who would support them? We all want to ensure our children are served well by the industry professionals we trust them to everyday. Sometimes I am amazed at what goes on in the course of school day.

The budget before you reportedly includes funding for 96 percent of the Board of Education's request. With hesitation, we in the Gaithersburg Cluster are supporting the Operating Budget recommendations before you. But we urge you to avoid any further cuts. We need to minimize the negative affects this economic turmoil has on students because the negative effects can linger on our students and on our communities. We need to ensure that funding is in place so our students have the support to ensure they can whether storms like their parents have seen during this economic downturn. We need to ensure all our students have the resources that enable them to have a fair shot at success. This comes from a public school system that values our children even in hard times and even when there are hard choices to make.

On and ending note, I work in the real estate industry. As we look for a sunny sign of economic improvement, The NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS latest housing statistics show the [Pending Home Sales Index](#) for February 2010 is up nearly 18% compared to February 2009. After a bad few years, that's a positive sign and one I hope will give us all a little hope for the future.