

WHEATON HIGH SCHOOL
12601 Dalewood Drive, Silver Spring, MD 20906
PARENT • TEACHER • STUDENT • ASSOCIATION

COUNTY COUNCIL HEARING
ON THE
BOARD OF EDUCATION'S OPERATING BUDGET

April 7, 2010

Good evening. I am Raysha Picerno, Vice-President of the Wheaton High School PTSA. Tonight, I am speaking on behalf of the parents, students, and staff of the schools of the Wheaton High School cluster. We commend our County leadership for doing the best they can with necessary budget cuts to all County agencies under the current fiscal black cloud. The Executive's proposed budget cut of \$137.7M to the MCPS operating budget is probably the largest and most significant of those unpleasant cuts.

Although the Wheaton Cluster supports our Superintendent's Recommended Operating Budget and Maintenance of Effort level request, we also realize that, given the current financial climate coupled with other yet-to-be resolved matters in Annapolis, his plan will be challenging. As a responsible governing body, it is your duty to our students to minimize the impact of this financial crisis on them by enabling our Superintendent and School Board to make necessary cuts and adjustments as transparently as possible. To that end, you must not cut your MCPS operating budget funding by even one penny more than the currently proposed \$137.7M. Of course restoring funding would be a most welcomed action but we only ask what is fair for Wheaton Cluster schools.

In order to support various initiatives like the new Core Value of Equity, academy programs in our Down County Consortium, Academic Intervention, Focus,

paraprofessional support for our significant English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) population, Special Program teachers, and teacher positions in the Middle School Magnet Consortium, it is crucial that we maintain as close-to-current levels of staffing in our schools to sustain our current levels of success. Wheaton Cluster has a very diverse population and needs these programs and this critical staff more than ever. We realize it is up to MCPS to sort out how to use the funding they receive but you need to know from us first-hand that these operating expenses are vital and that most of the funding levels ultimately come from you.

Wheaton Cluster schools have demonstrated increased student performance steadily over the last five years. Well documented increased performance touching all our cluster schools has been made possible, in large part, through reduced class size, current levels of staffing, and engaging programs. Increased class size appears to be necessary so we again respectfully request that the Council cut to MCPS funds does not creep beyond the \$137.7M, allowing our Board of Education to maintain a limit of only one additional student per class.

The current operating budget is a solid and smart investment in our students' short-term future. They deserve no less than those fortunate enough to have preceded them during sturdier economic periods.

We urge you to support any effort to minimize the Executive's cuts to the MCPS Operating Budget. Thank you.

Written by George Gadbois
Wheaton High School MCCPTA Delegate

04/06/2010