

Paint Branch Cluster

Part of the Northeast Consortium of Schools

Representing:

Paint Branch High School, Benjamin Banneker Middle School, Briggs Chaney Middle School, Burtonsville Elementary School, Cloverly Elementary School, Galway Elementary School, Greencastle Elementary School

Testimony before the County Council on the FY 08 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY 2007-2012 Capital Improvements Program

May 1, 2007

Testimony written by Shari Argue and Patti Twigg, Paint Branch Co-Cluster Coordinators

Good evening, President Praisner and members of the County Council. My name is Debra VanDemark, and I am the PTA President at Galway Elementary School, presenting testimony on behalf of the Paint Branch Cluster. We appreciate this opportunity to testify regarding the amendment to the FY 2007-2012 Capital Improvements Program that affects Galway ES.

Currently, Galway ES is scheduled to move to the holding facility starting in June 2007, with a project completion date of January 2009. We have been very concerned regarding safety issues during the renovation process because of the location and size of the holding facility, but are very pleased to report that MCPS has been responsive to our concerns and the safety needs are being addressed.

Our current facility has a capacity of 417 students, and our current enrollment is 693 students, some of who are housed in 12 relocatable classrooms. Based on the feasibility study done in 2001, the new school was originally supposed to have a capacity of 683, and the population was expected to decrease. MCPS took another look at the capacity since past projections had significantly underestimated the enrollment. MCPS revised our enrollment projections upwards, and because of this, raised the capacity to 771. Therefore we come before you tonight to ask for funding of the additional \$3.5 M in the amendment in order to increase the number of classrooms in our modernized school. The growth in enrollment projections reflects the changing housing patterns in our area due to young families with children replacing older residents, multiple families occupying single-family homes and construction of new housing in the area. We are very appreciative that this modification was made available in enough time to make the necessary amendment to our modernization plan in order to meet the needs of our school community.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Paint Branch Cluster.

Written testimony addendum for Paint Branch Cluster, May 1, 2007.

The Paint Branch Cluster supports the Superintendent's Recommended FY 08 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY 2007-2101 Capital Improvement Program. We support the schedule and the funding for adding capacity, modernizing schools, and repairing our facilities. We feel it is important to maintain, or if possible accelerate, the schedule that every child can attend school in a safe, healthy, secure building. This would be the best possible legacy we can give our children and future generations. In our cluster in particular, continuing new housing construction and shifting demographics make the need for careful planning and scrutiny of capacity issues critical. At the same time, we ask for continued focus and funds for maintenance projects for schools that are waiting for their scheduled turns to be modernized.

We want to thank you for your continued support of the two other capital projects in our cluster, namely the Cloverly ES gymnasium and the modernization of Paint Branch HS. We hope to see these projects remain on track for completion as scheduled.

The Cloverly ES gymnasium is scheduled to break ground this June and be completed in August 2008. This project was a long time in coming to fruition and Patti Twigg remembers advocating for it when her now 21-year-old daughter was a student at Cloverly. Thank you for your support of this project.

Paint Branch HS is currently 200 students over capacity and has four relocatable classrooms. As one of three high schools in the NE Consortium, Paint Branch must compete every year for students against Blake HS (new school opened in 1998) and Springbrook HS (modernized in 1994). Despite our strong signature program, dedicated and hardworking staff and amazing building service staff who keep our facility looking as good as possible, the reality is that we are operating at a distinct disadvantage in attracting students. Our modernization is badly needed to help level the playing field. Our signature programs are science and media, plus we also house pharmacy and medical careers programs and an academy of finance, all of which function adequately with the current facility but will be able to shine in our new, modernized building, better serving our enthusiastic students in state of the art facilities. Just as an example, our TV Production studio, an integral part of our Media Signature, is cramped and inadequate to the needs of the program. Our science labs were built for 20th century science, not 21st Century science. We ask that this project remains on track as scheduled in this budget, and thank you for your past support in providing the funding for it.