

**Richard Montgomery Cluster CIP Testimony
Montgomery County Board of Education; November 14, 2007**

Good evening President Navarro and Members of the Board. My name is Kate Savage, and I currently serve as the President of the Richard Montgomery High School Parent-Teacher-Student Association, as well as the Area Vice-President for the Churchill, Rockville, Richard Montgomery, and Wootton clusters.

I want to begin by thanking you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the children in our cluster. We appreciate the progress on Richard Montgomery High School here in Rockville, and the renovation work on College Gardens Elementary School; we are grateful that these critical projects are finally underway and nearing completion. Unfortunately, due to continual delays in starting construction, the plans for Richard Montgomery continue to lack a language laboratory and other features to provide a state-of-the-art learning environment for which the students and teachers have waited for many years.

More importantly, Richard Montgomery's students are in urgent need of an attractive fence or other barrier along Fleet Street in front of the school in order to channel students to the new crosswalks that the City of Rockville is establishing for their use as safe pathways to and from school. The focus must not only be on the safety of Montgomery County's school facilities, but on safe access by our children to those schools. The City of Rockville has stepped-up to do its part to protect our students' safety; MCPS should do its part as well. With the new school opening in just over a month, there is no time for delay.

We continue to oppose the CIP determination to drop consideration of badly-needed additions at Beall Elementary School and Twinbrook Elementary School, two schools that are each well over 50 years old, and which together account for nearly half of the portables in the entire cluster. MCPS' enrollment projections continue to underestimate actual enrollment in our cluster, and these additions remain a necessity.

For more than six years, we have respectfully requested that you provide a new gym floor at Beall Elementary School. The gym floor at Beall, as most of you have heard before, was made of a synthetic material that was designed to be cleaned with a solvent that is no longer available due to safety codes. It is now virtually unusable, due to the accumulation of dirt and dilapidation of the material; it is also a sticky, filthy, safety hazard. Please ensure that this long-standing need is addressed, as well as Beall's requests for an upgrade of the air conditioning to improve the computer lab environment, painting of the school's exterior, and for a sidewalk link along the upper blacktop and playground area to help facilitate safe "blacktop only" recess days.

At Julius West Middle School, we have requested the return of room 6 for school use. It is now used as a Supporting Service Training location, but Julius West requires all of its rooms for instructional use upon removal of the portables. We are likewise hopeful that the request for the safety fence will soon be fulfilled, in order to address serious concerns about the safety of the students in the parking lot of the school.

We continue to support MCCPTA's resolution in regarding Site Coordinators. Our experience with the Richard Montgomery and College Gardens projects affirms the need for a Site Coordinator to oversee such major projects. School reconstruction schedule slips, inspection problems, and costly errors or omissions have forced parents into the roles of project monitors. Site Coordinators are a more appropriate solution for this situation, and we urge your consideration of this request.

In closing, I want to again thank each of you for your service and concern for our children, and note that the Richard Montgomery Cluster supports MCCPTA's testimony. MCPS has caring and dedicated staff members and award-winning programs, but in order for our children to truly benefit from this, we must rely upon you to provide a safe, secure, modern environment for their learning. Thank you.