



May 5, 2007

Mr. Calvin Ball, Chair
County Council of Howard County
3430 Courthouse Dr.
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Good morning Mr. Chairman and County Council members; my name is Mary Jane Barbato-Grauso, I am the PTA Council President of Howard County. I am here today to speak on behalf of all the students in the HCPSS in support of both the FY'08 Capital Budget and Operating Budget presented by the HCPSS.

Council would like to commend the County Executive on his proposed budget that fully supports and funds the HCPSS capital budget requests, with over \$80 million being spent for school construction and much needed renovations, funding for full day kindergarten and technology upgrades.

We acknowledge that this year's County Executive budget clearly reflects his priorities that education in Howard County continue to be recognized as the premier school system in the state and includes the largest dollar increase for the HCPSS in County history (8.5% increase over the FY'07 approved budget). The increase will

- assist the school system to recruit and retain the best caliber educators available to fill positions in the new Veterans ES,
- fund a severely needed independent Comprehensive Facilities Assessment study of our schools to assure that the strategic long-term plan encompasses an appropriate refresh/renovation cycle for all schools and
- will provide staff to meet the instructional needs of the growing number of students in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program who have difficulty in achieving proficiency in core subjects.
- allow the schools school system to hire the best qualified teachers to meet the needs of at risk students faced with passing the MD State HSA's in 2009 as a requirement for high school graduation, and to continue achieving Annual Yearly Progress on the Federally-mandated (NCLB) MSAs,

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- to hire highly qualified technology personnel so that our students can achieve technological proficiency by the year 2012 as mandated by MSDE. With additional requirements for assessments to be taken electronically and continuing issues with school information system (SIS) (technology that does not compare favorably with our neighboring county), technology has become a paramount need, that should be considered as a long-term investment. Technology is fast becoming the driver in education not only in the area for instruction but also in the scope of efficiencies and management.

Finally, like technology, maintenance needs to be fully supported and considered a long-term investment. While PTA can assist the school system staff with programs to help identify areas in need of maintenance we still need qualified staff and appropriate equipment to keep our schools in tip-top condition avoiding the costly renovations that can cost tens of millions of dollars. And let's take that one step further now and in future budgets: let's begin meeting the challenge of going "Green" not only in boosting energy efficiencies in our schools, PTA would like to see the use of appropriate GREEN cleaning solutions and pesticides so that our children are removed from the dangers that early exposure to toxic chemicals brings.

I urge the County Council to fully fund both the FY'08 Capital budget and Operating budget as presented by the superintendent.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you.

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