

# PTA Council of Howard County

## Guidelines on Redistricting

The redistricting process is probably the single most emotional issue that faces parents and PTAs each year. We are fortunate to have a very strong school system that is looked upon with envy from other counties in the state. HCPSS has the same curriculum, student, and staff expectation for every school.

### **What Role Should Your Local PTA Have in Redistricting?**

Your PTA represents every parent in your school. If your PTA takes a position at all, it **MUST** be supported by your general membership. It is unacceptable for a local PTA to take a position that pits neighborhoods within its jurisdictions against one another.

If your PTA chooses to address redistricting, a general meeting should be called which has been given advance notification according to your bylaws. The meeting should be run in a business-like matter. Feelings often get heated in exchanges related to redistricting and abiding by strict meeting rules (such as Robert's Rules) helps to maintain control. Minutes should be taken for the record.

### **Considerations**

When you are approached with a request to address redistricting, evaluate each recommendation as it is introduced and ask:

**Does** it appear to support someone's personal agenda? If so, avoid it.

**Does** it suggest moving children from or to another school community within the county? If yes, make contact with that school's PTA president and advise them of your recommendations/ suggestions.

**Will** this benefit the entire school community?

**Whether or not your PTA decides to take a position,** provide guidance as to timelines and instructions for parents to provide input as individuals. You may also suggest that parents can form their own "concerned parents group" specifically dealing with redistricting; but to do so **NOT** as PTA representatives.

**If your PTA is considering taking a position, consider:**

**Is** your school currently over or under enrolled?

**What** is the population projected to be in the next year? Five years? Ten?

**Is** your membership clearly "of one mind" in the position you wish to take?

### **Testimony**

If your PTA does take a position on redistricting, then you should present testimony to the Board of Education in writing and, if possible, at its scheduled public hearing. When you present testimony, be professional and be sure to indicate that you are representing your entire PTA. Remember that the final decision must consider budgetary constraints. The Board of Education wants to hear facts and figures, research results, and specific recommendations.

### **Council's Role**

The PTA Council does not get involved in any local redistricting issues. Just as you represent your entire membership, we must consider all Howard County local PTAs in any testimony we present. However, we can help you with the mechanics of the process, how to run an effective meeting, or how to respond to concerned parents. Please contact us at 410-740-5153 or email at [ptachc@gmail.org](mailto:ptachc@gmail.org).