

Einstein Cluster Operating Budget Testimony 2011

My name is Jean Claude Zenklusen and I am the MCCPTA Cluster Coordinator for the Einstein HS Cluster.

At our cluster, we understand that the financial hardships the County is facing are not easy to solve and that the situation is dire for many program. However, we believe that education funding must be the first priority if we are to keep the area attractive to highly educated professional which in turn provide a stable tax base that allows to cope with economic downturns. This means that we must strive to maintain a level of funding of our school system consistent with Maryland's "maintenance of effort" law, and although it may no be possible to reach it, we request that the Board clearly reiterates that necessity to the County Council and Executive. Nevertheless, as tough choices will have to be made, we request that these cuts be made in a balanced way, and not in an indiscriminate "across the board" manner, preserving the resources needed to maintain a high level of education that our children deserve.

Specifically, we would like to request, as part of the DownCounty Consortium, that the funding for transportation that allows the Choice process to exist be preserved. The DCC has a very mixed population both ethnically and socioeconomically, and the ability of the student to attend a High School of their choosing outside their base area would be severely impacted if these funds were to be stripped, effectively making the DCC disappear. We know that this choice process is supported by the vast majority of parents, as our recent survey demonstrates (summaries accompany this testimony).

Additionally, we would like to request that the Board plans ahead to ensure that operating funds for adequate staffing will be available in FY13, when our newest school (DownCounty Consortium ES#29, ex McKinney Hills) will open to alleviate the severe overcrowding conditions at Oakland Terrace and Woodlin ES.

In closing, I would like to thank the Board for the attention given to the Einstein cluster as a whole that allows our schools to be adequately staffed, allowing our children to flourish in their schools.