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The Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations

2096 Gaither Road, Suite 204, Rockville, MD 20850
301-208-0111 • 301-208-2003 (fax) • office@mccpta.com

Testimony on the Proposed Superintendent's Fiscal Year 2012 Operating Budget
Wednesday, January 12, 2011
Presented by Kristin Tribble, President

We at MCCPTA thank you for the opportunity to testify on the proposed operating budget for FY2012. MCCPTA strongly supports the Superintendent's proposed level of funding for the school budget. We believe in the principle behind the state Maintenance of Effort law that does not decrease the amount spent per student. We are proud of the quality of our school system, and we want to maintain it.

While our cluster coordinators and other representatives of our local PTAs will also testify on elements of the budget that are of particular importance to their communities, MCCPTA has adopted specific priorities that our organization as a whole has identified for critical funding for next year.

As background, this list of priorities was developed through an inclusive process that began in the summer, when MCCPTA officers met with PTA leaders in each area of the County to talk about their local communities' needs. The MCCPTA operating budget committee also surveyed local PTA Presidents. Information from these sources was combined to produce a draft Operating Budget Priorities Resolution which was introduced at our September Delegates Assembly. This resolution was discussed, amended, and adopted at the October Delegates Assembly. These priorities represent a thoroughly discussed consensus position among our PTAs.

While we adamantly support the Superintendent's recommended level of funding for the MCPS Operating Budget, we recognize that we cannot be absolutely confident that the budget will be fully funded. Because opportunities for us to provide input on possible cuts will be limited later in the budget process, we are taking this opportunity to describe our funding priorities.

Our operating budget priorities resolution is attached. We do want to emphasize the following phrase from the beginning of the resolution:

"Be it resolved that the MCCPTA Delegates approve the following operating budget priorities for the organization to concentrate on this budget year, **each item to be given due consideration in relation to the others**" This phrase was inserted very deliberately in last year's resolution, and re-discussed and re-affirmed this year. It emphasizes that in the unfortunate event cuts need to be made, we would like MCPS to take a balanced approach to all of our priorities.

In summary, our priorities are:

-No reductions in maintenance, building service, or security staff to maintain safe, secure, and healthful schools,

- Judicious curriculum rollout; no new curriculum without adequate staff development, materials, and technology,
- No further increase in class sizes,
- Full implementation of hours-based staffing for special education students;
- Continued support for after school activities, and
- No reductions in academic intervention, focus, reading, ESOL, or special program teachers.

Our student population is growing in number and diversity, which poses both physical and instructional challenges. The increasing student population needs more space, even if in portables, and additional space needs to be maintained to preserve a healthful learning environment. Security is also an increasing challenge with more students in more spaces, and we have already experienced a major cut in our School Resource Officer program. Adequate staffing of these functions is necessary to facilitate learning. After school programs are also an important component for a secure learning environment in many of our communities.

Regarding the direct instructional elements of our priorities list: the general program does not work equally well for all students. With slightly larger class sizes and the increasing diversity of our student population, addressing the full range of student needs within one classroom, with one teacher, becomes more difficult. The phasing out of secondary learning centers adds to this challenge. We cannot afford to lose our support teachers, or to retreat from the hours-based staffing model for special education in middle school. It is these resources that allow the schools to better adjust to other resource constraints.

Finally, as MCPS begins to implement a new curriculum to promote compliance with the new state core standards, we need to ensure that MCPS teachers are adequately prepared and supplied with all the resources required by the new curriculum. There needs to be effective staff training and sufficient materials and technology support for this curriculum innovation.

We support your quest to provide the best possible education for our children. We stand ready to help you devise a strategy for minimizing possible negative consequences posed by the continuing tight fiscal environment. As you receive testimony from our diverse regions of the county, you will gain perspective on perhaps additional priorities unique to each of our communities. We hope you will take these considerations into account as the budget process proceeds.

In the meantime, we look forward to your leadership in emphasizing and informing our citizens that education must be a priority. Schools are the centerpieces of our communities and the youth that attend these schools are one of the most vulnerable populations. They are the future of our county. Let's not let them down.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide input in this important process.

October 26, 2010
Resolution on FY2012 Operating Budget Priorities

Whereas, MCCPTA's mission is to speak for children and without question our highest budget priority is education;

Be it resolved that the MCCPTA Delegates approve the following operating budget priorities for the organization to concentrate on this budget year, each item to be given due consideration in relation to the others:

No reductions in maintenance, building service, or security staff to maintain safe, secure, and healthful schools.

Judicious curriculum rollout; no new curriculum without adequate staff development, materials, and technology.

No further increase in class sizes,

Full implementation of hours-based staffing for special education students,

Continued support for after school activities,

And

No reductions in academic intervention, focus, reading, ESOL, or special program teachers.

Back Ground on Operating Budget Priorities:

MCCPTA officers visited PTA leadership in each area of the county in June and July, 2011. The list of priorities represents the most frequently mentioned concerns. Below are further details on each item.

No reductions in maintenance, building service, or security staff to maintain safe, secure, and healthful schools.

- Devoting resources to the classroom includes devoting resources to ensuring a classroom environment that facilitates learning. Components of a good learning environment include:

- well-maintained classrooms free of mold, vectors, and other contaminants
- freedom from bullying and gang activities
- reasonably limited access to school facilities
- more school resource officers.

Judicious curriculum rollout; no new curriculum without adequate staff development, materials, and technology.

- Parents around the County continue to have concerns about the way major curriculum reforms are implemented, including the integrated elementary school curriculum, middle school advanced courses leading to high school credit, and the accelerated math curriculum. Adequate supports would include:

- more assistance to students in filling in gaps in their background
- more teacher training BEFORE introducing the changes
- adequate instructional materials.

No further increase in class sizes - Until FY 2011, MCPS had made progress toward reducing class sizes. In a period of tight budgets it is important to protect that progress against further budget cuts.

Full implementation of hours-based staffing for special education students-As budget pressures force class sizes up, hours-based staffing for students with learning differences is especially important to minimize adverse impacts on both these students and general education students.

Continued support for after school activities - After school programs are important both to provide additional learning and enrichment opportunities, and to extend the protections of the school community environment to students beyond the school day. The latter is an important component of gang prevention.

No reductions in academic intervention teachers, focus teachers, reading teachers, or special program teachers.- Especially in light of other budget cuts in recent years, it is crucial to have these additional teaching resources to fill in the gaps for students needing re-enforcement of existing classes, or above- or below- grade level learning opportunities. .