

Watkins Mill Cluster

Watkins Mill High School.
Montgomery Village Middle School; Neelsville Middle School
South Lake Elementary School; Stedwick Elementary School; Watkins Mill Elementary School;
Whetstone Elementary School

FY2011 Capital Budget and Amendments to FY2011-2016 Capital Improvements Program

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Testimony presented by:

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Good evening. My name is Martha Crews, and I am one of the Watkins Mill Cluster Coordinators. I am also the PTA President at Whetstone Elementary School.

My testimony tonight is brief; simply, we are asking you tonight to fully fund the current CIP budget from Montgomery County Public Schools. Full funding of the budget is critical to allow these important budgeted projects to go through. One of the best things about living in Montgomery County, Maryland – and a compelling reason why people choose to live here -- is the excellence of our school system and our schools – and our county's commitment to our children. We appreciate your commitment to education and our future leaders.

Furthermore, the Watkins Mill Cluster fully supports the testimony you have already heard from MCCPTA President Kay Romero. Specifically, we support: (1) increasing system-wide renewal projects like HVAC replacements, (2) addressing severe overcrowding in our schools and (3) keeping planned additions and modernizations on track.

Keeping planned additions on track is especially critical in our cluster, and I can attest to this firsthand. My own local elementary school, Whetstone ES, is significantly overcrowded. Two of my children currently attend Whetstone, and I am in my 4th year as PTA President. Because of the overcrowding at our school, we have 7 portable classrooms, support teachers

must share spaces, and student learning often occurs in the hallway and alcoves. This situation is less than ideal. With the addition of 10 classes currently in the budget, our school's overcrowding will be alleviated. Your approval of the CIP budget will give our children the best opportunity to learn – and with an excellent facility comes excellence in learning.

In fact, right now is a perfect time to fund capital projects. In a “down-construction” market, the county can take maximum advantage of opportunities to improve our schools. And if some of the construction projects are bid earlier, the county will be able to do even more with the same amount of money.

In terms of construction projects, the Watkins Mills Cluster also supports the construction of a School Based Wellness Center at Watkins Mill High School, a joint project between the Department of Health and Human Services and MCPS. This enhanced health room, with the many and varied health, social, mental services it will provide, will be a tremendous asset to all students in our cluster, especially those who have little or no access to health care.

We have been fortunate that many of our cluster's capital needs have been addressed, or are being considered. However, other students who live in Montgomery Village—our neighbors who attend Gaithersburg HS—have not been quite so lucky. We therefore stand firmly beside the families of the Gaithersburg cluster as they ask that the modernization of Gaithersburg High School be returned to its original schedule for completion. We also support their request to accelerate the design phase so the project can be bid earlier in order to save costs.

Thank you for listening to us. We appreciate both your support and commitment to our schools and our children, and we urge you to fund this capital budget. Together, we can make a difference for the children of Montgomery County.