

Richard Montgomery Cluster CIP Testimony
Montgomery County Council
February 6, 2008

Good evening President Knapp and Members of the Council. My name is Kate Savage, and I am representing the Richard Montgomery Cluster tonight in my capacity as President of the Richard Montgomery High School PTSA and Area Vice-President for the Churchill, Rockville, Richard Montgomery, and Wootton clusters.

I want to begin by noting our shared sadness at the passing of your distinguished colleague – and our good friend – Councilmember Marilyn Praisner, whose dedication and service to our community were unparalleled. I also want to thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the children in our cluster.

Our cluster is genuinely grateful that the new Richard Montgomery High School and College Gardens Elementary School are now open for business. Unfortunately, due to continual delays in starting construction, the plans for Richard Montgomery continue to lack a language laboratory and other features to provide a state-of-the-art learning environment for which the students and teachers have waited for many years, and we hope that you can remedy these oversights.

We continue to believe that these projects could have greatly benefitted from a Site Coordinator to oversee their execution and completion. Our experience with these projects demonstrated that turnovers and inattentiveness by architects and project managers resulted in delays, inspection problems, and costly errors and omissions from the projects, with parents having to step in and assume the role of project monitors. A more appropriate solution is for the County to require the use of Site Coordinators on major school renovation or reconstruction projects, and we urge your consideration of this request, which has been endorsed by the Montgomery County Council of PTAs.

We oppose the CIP determination to drop consideration of badly-needed additions at Beall

Elementary School and Twinbrook Elementary School, two schools that are each well over 50 years old, and which together account for nearly half of the portables in the entire cluster. MCPS' enrollment projections continue to underestimate actual enrollment in our cluster, and these additions remain a necessity.

For more than six years, we have respectfully requested that you provide a new gym floor at Beall Elementary School. The gym floor at Beall, as most of you have heard before, was made of a synthetic material that was designed to be cleaned with a solvent that is no longer available due to safety codes. It is now virtually unusable, due to the accumulation of dirt and dilapidation of the material; it is also a sticky, filthy, safety hazard. Please investigate this long-standing need, as well as Beall's requests for an upgrade of the air conditioning to improve the computer lab environment, painting of the school's exterior, and for a sidewalk link along the upper blacktop and playground area.

At Julius West Middle School, we have requested the return of a room for school use that is currently used as a Supporting Service Training location, but Julius West requires all of its rooms for instructional use upon removal of its portables. We are likewise hopeful that the request for the safety fence will soon be fulfilled, in order to address serious concerns about the safety of students in the bus area near the parking lot and school driveway.

And speaking of fences, the new Richard Montgomery High School now fronts on a four-lane road. The school is in need of an attractive fence or other barrier along Fleet Street in front of the school in order to channel students to the new crosswalks that the City of Rockville established for their use as safe pathways to and from school. The focus must not only be on the safety of Montgomery County's school facilities, but on safe access by our children to those schools. The City of Rockville has stepped-up to do its part to protect our students' safety; the County must do its part as well.

In closing, I want to again thank each of you for your service and concern for our children. The Richard Montgomery Cluster supports MCCPTA's testimony, and we ask that the Council ensure that the CIP is kept on-track by fully funding and appropriately scheduling needed repairs and modernizations. MCPS has caring and dedicated staff members and award-winning programs, but in order for our children to truly benefit from this, we must rely upon you to provide a safe, secure, modern environment for their learning.

Thank you.