

President Floreen, members of the County Council, my name is Kevin Farragher, I am a coordinator from Quince Orchard Cluster, and we wish to thank you for your ongoing service and sensitivity to our county. Your concern and patient treatment of the issues is deeply appreciated.

In light of that, I'll try not to numb you with numbers this evening, for, as Josef Stalin put it, "One death is a tragedy. A million deaths is a statistic." Which leads me and others in my cluster to wonder: Might we all not somehow be complicit in the slow academic death by a thousand cuts of current and future student bodies to the extent we allow matters of accountancy to be our reason for allowing the removal of educational and counseling delivery resources from Montgomery County Public School?

An article in the March, 2010 Atlantic Magazine sheds light on my cluster's trepidation. (*How a New Jobless Era Will Transform America* - <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/03/how-a-new-jobless-era-will-transform-america/7919/>) It reports on a Yale University study demonstrating how life chances are permanently diminished by the effects of recession. Starting incomes fall by up to twenty-five percent for those educated or entering the workforce during significant recessions. This earnings gap persists, moreover, throughout the course of a career so that individuals thus affected often earn hundreds of thousands of dollars less across a lifetime than like-type workers educated and/or entering the workforce under more bountiful circumstances.

Research elsewhere indicates that causal factors for this gap reside in the amount of individualized instruction a child receives in his or her formative years. Generally speaking, current MCPS guidelines set class sizes at 22 students per classroom for all day kindergarten, 23 students per classroom for elementary school and 25 students per classroom for middle and secondary schools. Each additional seat in a classroom consequently robs a student of four to five percent of a classroom teacher's daily attention. Each additional seat is thereby dilutive of four to five percent of each student's ongoing focus and each student's initiative and intellectual curiosity.

We in Quince Orchard Cluster are apprehensive over the academic and societal dry rot that appears to follow increases in class size and decreases in proportional counseling resources. Likewise, we are alarmed at the immanent fate of our music and arts programs, which have earned recognition throughout the mid-Atlantic region, and we worry over what may become of our extracurricular activities and state championship caliber sports programs. While these are precisely the types of enrichment opportunities that are readily eliminated by the slash of a pen, we contend that the loss of such outlets would be out all proportion to any monies saved.

The Quince Orchard Cluster thus calls on this council to please not allow such resource impairments to begin to fester in our schools. We ask that you resolve to prevent the seeds of educational and community blight from starting to germinate in the already less

fertile soil of the MCPS budget. Above all, we implore you not to succumb to the arguments of so-called budget hawks who are quick to call for the elimination of line items labeled “curriculum coordinator” or “para-educator,” but who would be hard pressed to quantify, even with their fingers, the cost to the county’s communities of implementing a policy of fiscal neglect when it comes to funding our public schools. In Quince Orchard Cluster, we believe that the issue of class size is about more than just balancing a budget. It’s about distinguishing between the value of public education and the future cost to our community of its underfunding.

Quince Orchard Cluster does not envy you your role as arbiters in this debate. However, if you put yourselves in the way of budget cuts that would lead to unacceptable class sizes and unacceptable student-to-counselor and student-to-resource teacher ratios, we and the rest of the citizenry will join you, as we have in the past, in continuing to make Montgomery County Public Schools the brightest present manifestation of Montgomery County’s future. Thank you.