

Testimony of the Montgomery County Board of Education

Public Hearing on the FY 2008 Operating Budget

**Presented by
Ms. Nancy Navarro, President**

April 11, 2007

Good evening, Mrs. Praisner and members of the County Council. I am Nancy Navarro, president of the Montgomery County Board of Education. First of all, I want to acknowledge all the young people who are here today. I want to also acknowledge all the parents who took time to give powerful voice to the aspirations of their children. Finally, I applaud all the teachers, support staff, and administrators who are with us tonight—this is a great opportunity for me to say on behalf of the Board of Education—you are the finest education workforce in this country and we will do all that we can to support your work in the classroom. Tonight, I proudly join our children, parents, and staff to urge you, the Council, to fully fund the Board of Education's Operating Budget request.

Let me begin my testimony by saluting all of you, my colleagues on the Council, for all that you do for our county. On Election Day, our community spoke loud and clear and ushered in a new day in Montgomery County. As a result, I can say with great confidence that this Board of Education represents the true face of the Montgomery County that you see in this room today. The traditional way of doing business in Montgomery County is under very close scrutiny precisely because our community has changed immeasurably. And we must respond gracefully and strategically with the changing of the times. For this ought not to be about personalities, this ought not to be about politics, this ought to be about our children.

I have been watching the testimonies over the past few days. You have heard loudly and clearly from the taxpayers about their anxieties regarding the County Executive's funding recommendations on the Board's operating budget. I am here to tell you on behalf of the Board that we are going to work with you collaboratively and collegially to find a way to fully fund the Board's Operating Budget request. County Executive Ike Leggett has recommended a level of funding that leaves the Board's requested budget short by \$20 million. I do commend Mr. Leggett for his past support as a Council member in helping build a strong,

vibrant school system recognized today as the crown jewel of Montgomery County. I have studied his recommendations and yesterday, the superintendent released a preliminary analysis of those recommendations. I must say to you, as a parent of two children in the public schools and as someone who has spent a lifetime of advocacy giving voice to the aspirations and yearnings of the disenfranchised, that I am deeply concerned by Mr. Leggett's recommendations. It is absolutely the wrong message to send at a time like this. We must not turn back the clock on the progress we have fought so hard for all these years. This is not the time to cut back on resources that should be in our classrooms. Rather, the questions for us should be: What will it take to provide a quality education for all our children? I would rather pay to educate our children now, than to pay the price for their deprivation in the future. I repeat: it is all about the children.

Board members are elected countywide and the community as a whole places great value on the work of the Board in overseeing our school system. In return, we take our role very seriously. Our operating budget request was a measured and careful response to the community's expressed needs. In addition, we bargained with our labor unions in good faith and sent our teachers, administrators, and support staff a resounding message: We honor and value all that you do for all our children. You must send them the same message because they are there for our children everyday.

Finally, I am an advocate for continuous dialogue. We must come together as elected leaders to support the vision of MCPS as a wholesome, challenging, and welcoming school system—one in which every child, regardless of the circumstance of his or her birth, is guaranteed equal access to the best education that our tax dollars can provide. We must continue to build upon our success even as our world changes. Please support us by fully funding the Board's FY 2008 Operating Budget request. It is all about the children.

Estamos aquí para apoyar la educación de nuestros hijos. El sistema escolar público del Condado de Montgomery es de calidad, sin embargo aún hay mucho que hacer. Las escuelas necesitan fondos adecuados para seguir ofreciéndole una educación de calidad a nuestros hijos. Nuestros hijos son el futuro y merecen lo mejor en educación. No corten los fondos para nuestras escuelas!