



MONTGOMERY VILLAGE FOUNDATION, INC.

10120 APPLE RIDGE ROAD
MONTGOMERY VILLAGE, MARYLAND 20886-1000

(301) 948-0110 FAX (301) 990-7071 www.mvf.org

Testimony - Board of Education Community Forum September 18, 2008

Good evening President Navarro, Dr. Weast and members of the Board of Education. My name is Richard Wright, a member of the Montgomery Village Foundation Board of Directors. I am pleased to have the opportunity, as a representative of the 40,000 residents of Montgomery Village, to comment on priorities in the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Strategic Plan that we think should be prominent in your budget plans for FY 2010.

In these difficult economic times we must not lose sight of the MCPS Strategic Plan initiatives that provide the framework to ensure that the work of the school system is clearly focused on student success. This means focusing on budget items that will most effectively lend themselves to success for all of our students.

We certainly want to thank you for the very successful International Baccalaureate Program, now in its fifth year at Watkins Mill High School. The program is open to any student who is willing to take on the challenges it presents. We also greatly appreciate your cooperation with the Montgomery Village and Gaithersburg SHARP programs. These programs need to continue.

We also ask you to place emphasis on the following:

- Strengthen alternative and after school programs, particularly for children at risk, as a key element in gang prevention.
- Add support for technical education, magnet and IB programs for high school students.
- Increase ESOL and adult literacy programs so that they are easily accessible to all members of the immigrant community.
- Increase foreign language translations for parents.
- Modernize Gaithersburg High School now.

With so many parents working multiple jobs and absent from their homes in the afternoons, it is especially important that a variety of after school programs be available to every student. Such programs, including intramural sports, should be readily accessible to all students regardless of their academic standing.

Not all of our students have equal academic goals, but every student has the right to receive the education that best suits him or her. It is important to recognize that If Montgomery County is to continue to function well, appropriate educational opportunities must be made available both to students who want to become professional tradespersons and technical workers *and* to those who want to become professional teachers, physicians, and engineers. That is why emphasis must be placed on three key components: technical education, magnet programs, and IB programs for all high schools. Currently, the Edison Center, located in downcounty, is the only broad-based technology education center for high school students in

Montgomery County. The Edison Center not only has very few openings each year, but is not easily accessible to students who live in the Upcounty. Good technical education opportunities need to be made readily available to all Upcounty students.

The large influx of non-English speaking individuals to Montgomery County has created both a need for enhanced ESOL classes, English classes for the parents of our non-English speaking students, and more foreign language translations for parents. These initiatives will encourage good communication and a feeling of inclusiveness within the school community, which will be of help to our immigrant population on the path to school success.

Finally, we cannot emphasize strongly enough that the condition of the Gaithersburg High School facilities is deplorable and that it negatively impacts students and teachers who must contend with leaking roofs, malfunctioning heating and air conditioning systems, an inefficient electrical system and sub-standard equipment in classrooms and labs. How can Gaithersburg High School students be expected to improve their achievement levels under such conditions? Unacceptable facility conditions promote an unacceptable learning environment. Gaithersburg High School students deserve a modernized facility now to help place them on a level playing field as they strive for improved achievement and success as students.

We believe strongly that these initiatives, programs and project will help provide the framework to ensure the school system's continued effective focus on success for all of our students.

Thank you for your careful consideration of our comments.