IT’S YOUR CHOICE

The 2020 SMOB Nominating Convention Agenda and Voter Guide
Today, delegates from Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) secondary schools will help start the election process of one of the most important officials in the school system, the Student Member of the Board of Education (SMOB).

As one of the eight voices in the Board of Education – and, on crucial policy, hiring, and advocacy matters, one of eight votes- the SMOB has an enormous role responsibility by presenting student perspectives to other school system leaders.

The special Elections Committee of the Montgomery County Regional Student Government Association (MCR-SGA) would like to thank Watkins Mill High School for hosting this year’s Nominating Convention. And would like to wish the best of luck to all of the candidates.
**The Agenda**

**10:30 AM**  
Welcome, Pledge of Allegiance, American Anthem  
Call to Order – MCR Treasurer, Robert Wachen  
MCJC President, Ava Milisits  
Welcome Remarks – Board of Education Vice President, Brenda Wolff  
Remarks – Student Member of the Board, Nate Tinbite  
Report – Special Elections Administrators, Lambia Katsigiannakas and Marcelo Garibaldi

**10:45 AM**  
Candidates Speeches – 4 minutes per candidate  
***Speech order was selected at random in the presence of the candidates.***

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**11:45 AM**  
First Ballot  
This reduces the 12 nominees to 6. 
A special video presentation will begin with 5 minutes left. Please return to your seats once the video begins. Thank you!

**12:05 PM**  
Announcement of the remaining nominees  
Question and Answer Period

**12:30 PM**  
Second Ballot  
This vote determines the two candidates for the general election.  
Students will go to lunch in the Watkins Mill cafeteria until the conclusion of the convention.

**12:50 PM**  
Meeting Adjournment & Lunch

**1:15 PM**  
Announcements

**1:20 PM**  
Bus Departure

**NOTE:** All delegates are required to remain on the campus of Watkins Mill High School, in the specified areas during the entire convention.

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**Notable Speakers:**

- Brenda Wolff  
  BOE Vice President

- Nate Tinbite  
  BOE Student Member

- Robert Wachen  
  MCR Treasurer

- Ava Milisits  
  MCJC President
CANDIDATE PROFILES

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The candidates were asked to respond to four questions (in 150 words or less) and present information about their candidacies (in under 500 words).

- Why did you decide to run for SMOB?
- What are your top three goals for your term? What steps would you take to achieve your goals?
- The Student Member of the Board of Education recently acquired a vote on the MCPS budget. If you could allocate ten million dollars anywhere in the budget, where would it be and why?
- How will you ensure clear communication with the students of MCPS?

The candidate profiles have been prepared by the candidates and do not necessarily represent the views of the Special Election Committee, the Montgomery County Region of the Maryland Association of Student Councils, or Montgomery County Public Schools. The Special Election Committee cannot assure the accuracy of the statements contained in the document. The profiles are printed in an unedited form except for possible formatting.

NOTE: Some candidates did not provide information. SEC used only what candidates provided.
Personal Profile
13 years ago, my parents and I packed up our bags, left our home in Ghana and moved to Montgomery County, Maryland. When I was younger, I didn’t understand my parent’s decision to move to a completely different continent and restart our lives. However, my parents saw something in our county that I didn’t at the time: the promise of high-quality education.

Sadly, one thing I’ve learned during my time in the system is that promises can be broken. Our county, abundant in its resources and opportunities, oftentimes fails to meet the needs of many students. In 2020, it doesn’t make sense that students are prohibited from high achievement solely because of the school they attend and their socioeconomic status. It’s time we ensured that every student was given the resources and opportunities needed to succeed.

For 7 years, student empowerment and championing the student’s voice has been the central focus of my life. Through my advocacy on county, state, and national levels, I have pushed to bring change that the students of our county yearn to see. I have fought to make diversity and equity a priority in our county, worked with the Maryland Board of Education to strengthen school safety procedures throughout our state, and advocated for the student voice throughout our nation.

As SMOB, representing your voice at the board table in unprecedented ways will be my priority. It’s time that our county’s policies better reflected the needs and wants of our county’s student body. It’s time that your success was not hindered by factors beyond your control. It’s time to stand up for your education.

Record of Action:
- **SMOB Chief of Staff**: This year I had the honor to serve as SMOB Nate Tinbite’s chief of staff. Through this position, I aided Nate in representing the voice of all of our county’s students at the board table.
- **MCR-SGA Legislative Affairs Director**: Through this role I became familiar with policy and the processes required to push change in all levels of government. With the knowledge I’ve gained, I will ensure that my SMOB term is as effective as possible.
- **Maryland Center for School Safety**: Working under the State Board of Education, I had the chance to work with policy makers to directly influence policy that impacted students across the state.

The Vision:
- Making sure all students have access to technology and wifi at home through a 1 to 1 chromebook program
- Establishing spaces in every school building dedicated to mental health and de-stressing
- Ensuring feminine hygiene products are available in all girl’s bathrooms
- Overhauling our lunch menu by giving students the chance to weigh in on school food options
- Reforming our curriculum by introducing a broader range of history classes that are less Euro-centric than the courses currently offered and strengthening career-pathway/choice programs
- Pushing for the addition of more environmentally friendly measures to schools: solar panels, refillable water bottle stations, electric school buses
Q1. Why did you decide to run for SMOB?
During my time in Montgomery County, I have attended schools in five different clusters and have seen the various aspects of our school system. Through my years of work in advocacy, it has become extremely clear that there are major systematic problems in our county that must be fixed. I am running for SMOB because it is time to eradicate the inequities in our county, fix the holes still present in our system, and ensure that the student voice is heard. When I first began advocating for students, I envisioned an MCPS in which every student throughout the county received a high-quality education. That vision still holds strong today and as SMOB, I will fight to ensure that long-term and impactful change is brought to our county.

Q2. What are your top three goals for your term? What steps would you take to achieve your goal.

1. **Increase Access to Technology:** With an increasing number of our assignments and becoming digital, it’s vital that all students have equal access to technology in and out of the classroom. As SMOB, I plan to launch a system in which every student receives their own chromebook to use at school and at home.

2. **Closing the Opportunity Gap:** As the opportunity gap continues to plague our county, I plan to address the epidemic through: free ACT/SAT prep programs for students, increased employment of bilingual staff members, and expanding our county’s career pathway programs.

3. **Improving Student Life:** Every year we spend over 1,200 hours in school, it’s important that our daily experiences set us up for academic success. We need a lunch menu that better accommodates vegetarian/vegan students, a straightforward system of reporting facility issues (eg. broken bathroom locks), and project-based learning to reduce the stress of traditional testing.

Q3. Say you got 10 million dollars, where would you put the money?
For many students, the opportunity to gain work experience by holding a job would be very beneficial. However, finding flexible jobs that accommodate the busy schedule of a student can be a difficult task. I would use two million dollars to launch a program in which students can be given paid work opportunities directly through MCPS. With the remaining eight million dollars, I would set aside four million for the hiring of more school psychologists and more comprehensive mental health awareness training for staff members. I believe that it’s important that we not only work towards aiding students struggling with mental health but also work to prevent the development of mental health issues. Finally, with the last four million dollars, I would strengthen our county’s career pathway programs. Our county needs to provide students with the resources necessary for future success, regardless of what path they take after high school.

Q4. How will you ensure clear communication for the students?
The job of the SMOB at its core is representing the voice of the students of our county. Without proper communication this would not be possible and so as SMOB, I would utilize new methods of reaching out to a greater range of students. For instance, I plan to establish a coalition of students at each school who will document the issues most prominent in their building. Every quarter, I’ll meet with this coalition to come up with specific game plans for addressing those problems. I will also rely on traditional methods of communication: the SMOB minute, social media, digital live streams, and in-person school visits to ensure that your voice is accurately represented at the board table.
Nominating Convention 2020

Deborah Etyang
Grade 11 – Northwood High School
aminatetyang@gmail.com

Personal Profile
No candidate profile was submitted to the Special Elections Committee by the required date.

Q1. Why did you decide to run for SMOB?
My inspiration to run for SMOB stemmed from previous office holders Eric Guerci, Ananya Tadikonda and Matt Post, who had visited Parkland Middle School to campaign. I was amazed at how student advocacy and participation brought about positive change in Montgomery County, such as Eric Gueci’s success in extending the power of the SMOB to vote on issues like the budget, school closings, boundary lines and more and Nate Tinbite push for free driver’s ed courses.

Q2. What are your top three goals for your term? What steps would you take to achieve your goals?
Some of the main points I want to work on are to bridge the achievement gap by advocating for the expansion of the MC2 program allowing students to be in high school and college concurrently as well as free SAT and ACT prep courses to ensure that there are no financial obstacles obstructing students from success. I plan to lobby for the implementation of financial management courses in the curriculum, to prepare students for independence and life after being an mcps student.

Q3. The Student Member of the Board of Education recently acquired a vote on the MCPS budget. If you could allocate ten million dollars anywhere in the budget, where would it be and why?
I would allocate $10 million towards tech modernization in schools, seeing as City Council cut funds toward this project. These funds would not only secure the growth of this program, but ensure that all students have the proper equipment and technology to succeed in school and at home. Also training staff to establish clear communication with their students.

Q4. How will you ensure clear communication with the students of MCPS?
I created an Instagram account to establish a direct line between me and my peers and I plan to check my DMs everyday. I will create a gmail dedicated to responding to any questions and concerns the students have. And as SMOB I will try to hold town halls in each district to guarantee an exchange between me and my peers in which we discuss present issues and how we could go about solving them.
Personal profile

My name is Roselyn García and I attend James Hubert Blake High School. Throughout my school career, I have seen general voting for SMOB take place. It was always a time that sparked excitement for me, but many students, like myself, wondered how much an impact SMOB really had. As human beings, we imagine this picture perfect image, we create high expectations, and expect fast results. We may not be able to create a perfect county, but together, as students and adults, we can create something very close to that.

Many students feel like their voices still aren't being represented or heard. But students managed to find their own ways to share their stories and make their voices heard. Unfortunately, it's not a matter of them being heard or seen, but rather what they need is not executed properly. SMOB is one of the best ways students can be represented in the county. Because they have this responsibility, SMOB needs to be able to: be someone who is willing to step out of their comfort zone, someone who is optimistic, someone who has the ability to communicate clearly, and other qualities that students believe they need from a leader. Yes, I have never had a major leadership roles, but I've always been willing to conquer my anxiety in order to fight for what I believe in. I also try to be as open minded as possible, and understand the different point of views that you may have.

Q1. Why did you decide to run for SMOB?
I've always liked the idea of being a leader and being in a leadership position, and even though it fascinated me, I never really had enough guts to actually attempt it. Despite my lack of experience and barriers that have stopped me before, I won't let it stop me to do what I'm passionate about. I care so much for these students and I will put them first. I strongly believe that my fellow students deserve the best when it comes to their education, well-being, and even their lives outside of school. I decided to run because I care and I only want the best for all students, parents, and staff. I'm not doing this for my own personal gain, but rather for the people I want to help: you guys.

Q2. What are your top three goals for your term? What steps would you take to achieve your goals?
My first priority is to help put students on the path for healthy and well-maintained mental health. Just spreading awareness is not enough and we need to actually build a stronger connection with the students, so they know they're being taken seriously. I want to create an environment where they feel speaking up about their mental health and their experiences is something natural. My second goal is to improve the distribution of the budget. Instead of cutting a couple departments entirely, the budget should be equally distributed to all departments. It would help students realize that their passions do matter and they have the resources they need. My third goal is to help schools that have a worn-down infrastructure. I would make sure there is money set aside to help improve those schools and not just for the improvement of other schools that might not need it as much.

Q3. The Student Member of the Board of Education recently acquired a vote on the MCPS budget. If you could allocate ten million dollars anywhere in the budget, where would it be and why?
If I were to put 10 million dollars into something to help the schools, I would put it into improving infrastructure. It is the most expensive issue and is at a very high demand by students. It’s important that our students are not in unsafe buildings or in ones that are decaying or wearing out. It would also create a good image for the school and make it more appealing for students to attend.
Q4. How will you ensure clear communication with the students of MCPS?
I plan to be more active on social media and in person, so if students have a question, I'll be available to answer. I'd make sure that they understand everything that is going on, as well making sure I know what they want and that I would do my best to execute that. I would let them know that despite their high expectations, I will do the best I can to make everything they want happen.
Nominating Convention 2020

Angel Herrera
Grade 11 – Springbrook High School

Personal Profile

No candidate profile was submitted to the Special Elections Committee by the required date.

Q1. Why did you decide to run for SMOB?
   A response to this question was not submitted to the Special Elections Committee by the required date.

Q2. What are your top three goals for your term? What steps would you take to achieve your goals?
   A response to this question was not submitted to the Special Elections Committee by the required date.

Q3. The Student Member of the Board of Education recently acquired a vote on the MCPS budget. If you could allocate ten million dollars anywhere in the budget, where would it be and why?
   A response to this question was not submitted to the Special Elections Committee by the required date.

Q4. How will you ensure clear communication with the students of MCPS?
   A response to this question was not submitted to the Special Elections Committee by the required date.
Personal Profile
My name is Helina Kassa and I am a Junior at Springbrook HS. At my school, I am involved in some clubs such as Debate Team, Cross Country, and Chemistry Club. Outside of schools I am apart of Pete Buttigieg US Presidential Campaign and help run Brook Codes a computer science hackathon event in Maryland along with some other students in MCPS. When I go off to college, I definitely want to major in Political Science since politics is something that directly impacted us and I think it’s important to be involved in that decision since it dictates really everything that happened in the world. Some Leadership experience I have is being President on my school Moco For Change Chapter (Brook4Change, President of my school's National English Honors Society, and even being an Intern for Del. Stewart in the Maryland General Assembly.)

Q1. Why did you decide to run for SMOB?
I decided to run for SMOB to make a change in my community. There are issues in our county that need to be addressed such as the opportunity gap, diversity and student income level to be a determining factor in students’ quality education. I believe everyone student in MCPS should be guaranteed an A1 education regardless of where they live or how much money their parents make.

Q2. What are your top three goals for your term? What steps would you take to achieve your goals?
- Diversity of SGA, by opening up the position of SMOB to 3 students, one from each region (such as the Down County Consortium, Upper County Consortium and Northeast Consortium). This is something I think should be done, because one student from the whole 100,000 students is just not enough representation of different backgrounds, and issues in the county. By having one rep from each region it would help have a representation of a majority of students and have problems from all around the county be heard. I would hopefully be able to accomplish this through a bill passing and advocating this issue among other board members.

- Improving Wellness and Health in schools to allow school nurses the ability to hand out over the counter medicine (generic meds like; Tylenol, Advil, Claritin and etc.). This can be done by revamping the MCPS rules and regulations towards what OTC of what cannot

Candidate submitted response longer than allowed. The statement ended at the 150th word.

Q3. The Student Member of the Board of Education recently acquired a vote on the MCPS budget. If you could allocate ten million dollars anywhere in the budget, where would it be and why?
1. With a 10 million dollar budget, I would allocate all the funds to create equity change so every student has accessible operates through funding and support. That would be done by putting money into clubs/project / SGA / research projects done by every student in MCPS so the money will never be an issue for the student pursuing something. Using some of the funds to ensure every high school has a Wellness Center to help the coup with stress, depression, and any mental health issues or inquiry students have.

2. I would also like to put a portion of the money into building a Carver Education in the down county area since Rockville for some can be far to get to and mobilize MCPS organizations such MCR (county wide SGA) so students from around the county can be involved as well. I would want to put the money into these

Candidate submitted response longer than allowed. The statement ended at the 150th word.
Q4. How will you ensure clear communication with the students of MCPS?
I would allow students and even to communicate and be involved in discussing issues by creating pop up polls on myMCPS. Some good examples of this are with weather emergency decisions, students will be able to get involved by sending in pictures of what their area outside looks like, and comments / concerns they have since only so much can be seen by MCPS employees to determine if schools should be closed. As of course social media, my email and trying to vista highschool and having town halls and forums with other board members.
Personal Profile:
Hi! I'm Vicky Kidder and I am a junior at Magruder High School. To be completely honest, up until 8th grade, I never really saw myself pursuing student advocacy. I'd always been pretty shy and feared being judged by my classmates if I strived for a position in student government or pushed for a change in my school. However, I always felt like I could do something to improve the situation at my school, from something as little as planning more pep rallies to lobbying for anti-gun violence legislation on the national level. I had a burning desire inside of me to do something for someone else and really have a positive impact on those around me. Thus, I decided to run for SGA President of Shady Grove Middle School (Go Timberwolves!) and won. From there, I was introduced to the Montgomery County Junior Council and I fell in love with the world of student advocacy. I felt like I could bring real, tangible change to fruition for my peers. My sophomore year of high school, I joined the Montgomery County Regional Student Government Association as a Special Elections Deputy (honestly a very hard MCR position to execute). I started the SEC Instagram and Twitter, and helped spread information about the SMOB election across the county. However, I NEVER saw myself running for the same position I worked so hard to promote to the county. Then, my junior year at Magruder came around. I was elected the SGA Vice President of Magruder and I rejoined the MCR this time as an Educational Policy Deputy and I absolutely love it. Testifying in front of the Board of Education to prioritize not only racial diversity, but socioeconomic diversity across all MCPS schools, working on policy papers, and meeting with such a talented group of student leaders has been so rewarding. Yet, I still felt as if there was more I could do for the county. I felt, and still feel like I can and should reach a much larger group than my peers in the MCR. I feel like so many students are in the same place I was not too long ago, afraid of speaking up and standing out among their in order to push for positive change, and I truly believe that needs to change. I haven't started any non-profit organizations, and I haven't won any highly coveted awards. But, I have felt the shame of being told that I wouldn't go that far because nobody from Magruder does. I have felt the anger of seeing my peers at other schools being offered more opportunities than me because we differ by one number in our zip codes. And lastly, I feel the same burning passion that I believe lots of other students do to be heard, and to have their desires represented through action. I never thought I'd have the delegates at Nom Con read my candidacy profile, but lots of frustration and thinking later, here we are.

Q1. Why did you decide to run for SMOB?
Because I feel like I need to do something for my peers. Being a Montgomery County resident my entire life, I know the disparities that exist in our community all too well. With rampant incongruity in racial composition, FARMS rates, graduation rates, and test scores, I feel inclined to ask myself, how could I NOT do something? I've decided to run for SMOB so the girl who so badly wishes she could take a law class but can't because she doesn't go to Richard Montgomery High can. I've decided to run so the boy who desperately needs a mental health professional to talk to can on a needs-basis. I've also decided to run so our LGBT+ students can learn a little about their extensive history in the classroom. I would like to hear and help my peers who don't feel like anyone is listening to them.

Q2. What are your top three goals for your term? What steps would you take to achieve your goals?
Being a student, I understand the stresses that come along with the typical MCPS' student's life. I also understand what it's like to feel hopeless, and to need support. I want to provide more extensive mental health resources for students who truly need a person to lean on. This means more full-time school psychologists and mindfulness training for teachers. The opportunity gap has been an issue that has plagued our county for decades. And what seems to be at the center of it? SAT and ACT scores. As the SMOB, I would push for free SAT and ACT prep courses offered in schools so EVERY student has equal access to valuable test materials. Finally, MCPS is one of the largest polluters in the state of Maryland Gradual introduction of electric school buses, limited usage of single-use plastics in school lunches, and solar panels are the right way to go.
Q3. The Student Member of the Board of Education recently acquired a vote on the MCPS budget. If you could allocate ten million dollars anywhere in the budget, where would it be and why?
Minor school renovations. Obviously, ten million dollars is not nearly enough money to rebuild and fully renovate all the MCPS schools that are in dire need of touch-ups to their school building. However, fixing broken ceiling tiles, replacing crooked sinks, and repairing water mains are all small renovations that can be done to greatly improve the infrastructure of many of our schools. Schools should not have to close down because their water mains are breaking due to having decades old pipes and student should not have to walk in their school hallways worrying if ceiling tiles will fall on them. While a relatively small amount of money in MCPS over billion-dollar operating budget, long-needed touch ups can be done with this amount that will vastly our buildings.

Q4. How will you ensure clear communication with the students of MCPS?
Social media and morning announcements. I think our current SMOB, Nate Tinbite, is doing an excellent job posting infographics and Instagram story updates explaining what is happening policy-wise at the Board level in easy-to-understand terms for our students, and I plan on doing the same. Enforcing the playing of the SMOB Minute is something the SMOB and SEC has struggled with in the past, but a little help from school SGAs can go a long way in making sure our students are educated about the issues that affect them in Rockville.
Personal Profile:
My name is Yoni Liebstein, and I am currently a sophomore at Walter Johnson High School. My father was born in Brooklyn, New York, and married my mother, a Peruvian immigrant with no English-speaking skills who came to the United States at the age of eighteen. I grew up in a bilingual family and was surprised to learn that there were other kids just like me. I wrestled in middle school and very much enjoy playing lacrosse now.

Coming to Walter Johnson as a new student, I had no idea what to expect, as I attended Jewish Day School from kindergarten through middle school. Upon arrival, I quickly caught on to the trends, words, and culture of my school and what I thought was universal throughout the majority of MCPS. I was amazed, but not surprised, by the thoroughness of the teachers and school system, as well as the success my peers were having in their rigorous classes. However, I soon realized that the success I was seeing by my peers was not nearly being replicated throughout my entire school.

On one of my first days ever at MCPS, I remember sitting down in my assigned seat as the teacher began to describe the course and assign the first assignment. As I began the assignment, I noticed several confused faces at the table across from me. I approached them and learned that the kids at this table had just immigrated from Honduras, Bolivia, and Venezuela and could not speak nor understand a word of English. For the rest of this semester, I sat beside these students, translating the directions and assignments from English to Spanish, and guiding these peers to success. This experience was eye-opening and hit close to home, as my mother must have gone through the same challenges as these immigrants. I realized not enough was done for students like these in my school and began to broaden my view to other schools and MCPS as a whole. I noticed that catching on to the culture of a new school and having success did not come easy to immigrants as well as many others and decided that all students should have an equal opportunity for success.

Q1. Why did you decide to run for SMOB?
This is the most important SMOB election ever. There is a movement in the county to redraw the school boundaries and reassign kids from their schools. Many students will be sent away from their current friends and teachers and thrust into new schools where they may not know anybody. There’s no reason to uproot us and destroy our social lives. Therefore, I decided to run in order to maintain the current boundaries and keep students with their friends, teachers, schools and within their neighborhoods.

Some folks want new boundary lines to promote diversity and reduce the achievement gap, both admirable goals. I decided to run for SMOB to try and lower the achievement gap without the chaos of changing schools.

Q2. What are your top three goals for your term? What steps would you take to achieve your goals?
1. Keep local kids in local schools; no major redrawing of school boundaries.
2. Close the achievement gap: Research has shown that the best time to make an impact on a child’s learning is from preschool through elementary school. We must catch the kids when they are young. Can you name any NBA player that first picked up a basketball at age 16? Of course not, they all started playing and practicing since they were 5 or younger. It’s the same with the development of reading and math skills. I would focus our energies and money funding more reading and math teachers, tutors and skill development sessions to better prepare these kids for high school and careers.
3. CLEAN BATHROOMS with SOAP…Is this too much to ask for?
Q3. The Student Member of the Board of Education recently acquired a vote on the MCPS budget. If you could allocate ten million dollars anywhere in the budget, where would it be and why?

We all know how our knowledge seems to dissipate in the summer. I would allocate ten million dollars to new private-public partnerships. Imagine school-based summer day camps for elementary kids that mix reading and math skills with sports and games throughout the day. Subsidies would be provided to low-income families. I would also hire professional reading and math tutors who would stay in MCPS libraries after hours to help elementary kids with additional reading and math tutoring after school. This is education justice and closing the achievement gap would be my highest joy.

Q4. How will you ensure clear communication with the students of MCPS?

Clear communication with the students of MCPS is of utmost importance. In order to communicate clearly and effectively, I will use Youtube to upload videos of important information in a clear and detailed manner. In addition to Youtube, I will post on Instagram to reach even more students and to convey shorter, more concise information. Students will be free to email me at any time, as well as send me messages on Instagram with questions, concerns or comments. Lastly, there is a possibility of a website, conveying important and detailed information. Communication is the key to success, therefore it is my goal to be able to communicate with as many people as possible.
Personal Profile
I have done many things involving advocacy such as protesting at walkouts, hosting peaceful protests, and even holding hearings within my school! I have done SGA for 8 years and MCR for 2. I have had the experience and great pleasure to deal with students from all around our county, and many of whom, I’ve had the pleasure to hear what they want to see, be done, and they themselves have done. I wish to further both yours and these students’ ambitions to the level where they no longer ARE ambitions and instead now they are reality. I’ve pushed for student voices for as long as I can remember and now I want to take the chance to push even further and harder. I believe that every student no matter who they are deserves a voice and a vote on MCPS’s Board of Education.

Q1. Why did you decide to run for SMOB?
I ran for SMOB because I had seen what it was like not getting my voice heard. I saw how much SMOB truly impacted those around me, so I decided this time instead of being without a voice, I would give one to myself and to those couldn’t find theirs.

Q2. What are your top three goals for your term? What steps would you take to achieve your goals?
My top 3 goals are program equality, program budgets, and find a medium where everyone can be comfortable with the new boundary system that is coming into place. Program equality is a big objective for me. Most schools in MCPS don’t have the same opportunity as others, for example, PBHS has 30 programs whereas another school has 15 programs. Students should have the same opportunity for programs no matter who they are and where they live. This leads to Program Budgets. If program budgets are increased then it will allow for more programs in more schools across the county! In the upcoming boundary system; it will take lots of work and time, however, I truly believe with enough time, effort, and communication with the community, a compromise can be found where people who don’t want to be in the boundary system, don’t have to be in it.

Q3. The Student Member of the Board of Education recently acquired a vote on the MCPS budget. If you could allocate ten million dollars anywhere in the budget, where would it be and why?
I would love to allocate the fund into programs, as $10 million would give many schools equal program opportunities such as in-school dual enrollment. HOWEVER, If I had the chance, I would want to hear what the students of MCPS have to say about it, what they think is the best course of action, and from their continue with the allocation of $10 million. As SMOB, I am here for what the students want and need.

Q4. How will you ensure clear communication with the students of MCPS?
I will speak to my constituents [students] with the utmost transparency and be completely honest about what I can do, will do, and have done. I will find a suitable time that fits the students and update them progressively. I will also keep in touch with the students via online communication and other means such as MCJC, MCR, & General Assemblies.
Personal Profile:

Throughout the past years, Montgomery County Public Schools has become and remained an outstanding school system in the eyes of the country. What more would anyone expect from a county that is willing to spend billions of dollars on its students’ education every year? Every student that climbs the ladder of the education system is a representation of our faith in the future, one that our students will contribute to. Even as we enter into a new decade, the center of focus still rests on the students, each of whom deserves a quality education, regardless of where they are from, how they identify, or what they look like. We need to standby our views so that they can be respected.

Students lie at the center of our school system, there is no doubt about that. I am running for SMOB on the belief that student rights are human rights, and nothing short of that. Students deserve to have basic necessities and comforts provided to them, and it is a goal of mine to achieve this by instituting new policies, like more inclusive bathrooms and abolishing aspects of the dress code that imply unequal treatment of students.

I am a firm believer in change and progress, but those are things that cannot be accomplished without your help. The SMOB is a position that represents over 160,000 students, and yet each term that they serve only lasts for one year. It is imperative that every SMOB works to continue the progress that has been made, and not to tear down past advances to start anew each year. Next year, let's work to keep progress coming. Let's break down barriers and bridge the divide between the students and the decision makers. Let's Keep It Muving.

I support:

- Increased inclusivity for students of all races, genders, and sexual orientations
- Narrowing of the achievement gap through:
  - Reapportionment of county resources to level the playing field between schools and students
  - Establishing increased transparency between teachers and students
  - Providing adequate resources and services to students in need
  - Making summer school a more accessible and viable option
- Increased environmental consciousness and awareness
- Greater emphasis on the importance of student activism
- Hiring new, trained, and education counselors and psychologists to work with students to prioritize their mental health

I oppose:

- Misappropriation of county resources and time
- Discrimination within the school and classrooms
- Changing teachers and schedules every semester

Education and Experience

Thomas S. Wootton HS, (2018 - Present)
SGA Member
SGA President
Safety Patrol Captain
Green Team President
Lakewood ES, (2010 - 2013)
Q1. Why did you decide to run for SMOB?
My decision to run for SMOB stems from the extensive involvement and experiences I have gathered over the years. Growing up in Montgomery County, I never thought that a single student could make a noticeable impact on such a large and complex school system until I entered Student Government and was introduced to what wonders could be accomplished through advocacy on important issues and collaboration between students. It is my vision that students should be treated like adults and have a fair say in the education they are receiving, which is a theme that past SMOBs have kept true to themselves. It is my goal to make sure that the student voice is heard. I’m running for SMOB because I feel that I have the enthusiasm and capability to continue the progress that has been made and fight for a brighter future for all students in this county.

Q2. What are your top three goals for your term? What steps would you take to achieve your goals?
1. Environmental Sustainability
   There is room for improvement when it comes to the carbon footprint of MCPS. We need to:
   - Stop buying plastic water bottles
   - Make sure new schools and renovations adhere to Green Ribbon School Standards
   - Invest in renewable energy technologies, such as solar panels and electric school buses
2. Student Wellness
   It is unreasonable to expect students to succeed academically if they’re not receiving the mental and emotional support they need. We will:
   - Hire school psychologists for schools that don’t have one
   - Set up Wellness Centers at all high schools
   - Implement a weekly study hall period at all middle and high schools
3. Technology Access
   As technology quickly improves, we need to stay up to date. We have to:
   - Invest in faster and more reliable WiFi
   - Implement a Chromebook and Graphing Calculator loan system at all middle and high schools
   - Allow cellphone use during all middle school lunches

Q3. The Student Member of the Board of Education recently acquired a vote on the MCPS budget. If you could allocate ten million dollars anywhere in the budget, where would it be and why?
It is imperative that we allocate funds towards the expansion of opportunities for our students in order to adequately prepare everyone for their future endeavors through college and careers. It is for this reason that I would allocate three million dollars toward the expansion of choice and career programs to more localized areas around the county in order to allow for more students to be able to reap the benefits these programs exhibit. Thereafter, I would apportion another five million dollars toward both the preparation and the acquirement of opportunities to take standardized tests, such as the SAT, ACT, and AP exams. The final two million dollars would go toward funding the expansion of technologies that would help students better stay on top of their school work, ranging from faster and more reliable WiFi all the way to more modern security and heating systems.
Q4. How will you ensure clear communication with the students of MCPS?

The work of the SMOB is contingent on consistent and comprehensive communication with the constituency, the students of MCPS. In order to better listen to the students, I will commit to the following measures:

- Consistent in-person visits to all of our middle and high schools in order to assess the different priorities that exist at each school
- Regular broadcasts of the SMOB Minute video updates
- Include students from all middle and high schools in my SMOB Advisory Council
- Hold multiple town halls at different locations across the county for better turnout and access by all students
- Produce detailed quarterly documentary videos to inform students of progress that is being made

Hearing the concerns of the students is definitely a top priority, and it is often the student voice that makes the advocacy of the SMOB meaningful.
Personal Profile:
MCPS is the second best school system in MD, and one of the top school systems in the nation. This is something we should be proud of. However, why are we not #1, in the nation?

What I will accomplish as SMOB

- Stop budget cuts in music and arts. Music and Arts programs have been hit hard from budget cuts over the past few years. We need to protect these courses. These are not only fun courses, but they also help students in school. A study by the Journal of Educational Psychology concluded a study in 2019 that students enrolled in arts and music classes did better on tests. This is backed up by many other studies too. We need to protect these classes.
- More electives and career treks to prepare kids for the future, whether it be college or somewhere else.
- Zero emission, hydrogen fuel cell school busses. They require no fossil fuels to run, give no carbon emissions, and are more reliable than electric busses.
- Rework our water pipe systems to lower lead level, and improve the taste of water in water fountains.
- Cell phones allowed in all schools.
- Better lunches. Science has proven that those who don’t eat breakfast or lunch perform worse in school. However, what we serve in the cafeteria now is not edible. We need to overhaul the program to lower the price, and improve the quality.
- We will rebuild our crumbling buildings.
- Update school security system and install emergency panic buttons in schools. These measures will help ensure all MCPS schools will always be safe from any outside threats.
- Improve cyber security in the county. In December, 2019, nearly 6,000 MCPS student accounts were hacked. We have to do something to prevent this from happening again.
- Bring bike rack back to every school.
- Finish getting driver’s ed programs brought back in schools.
- Expand county test prep programs to help students prepare for the SAT, ACT, and AP tests.
- Unblocked WiFi.

Schools I went to:
Sherwood Elementary
Farquhar Middle School (The old and new buildings)
Sherwood High School

Experience:

- In my time in boy scouts, I have been elected to the position of patrol leader twice and assistant patrol leader twice.
- I have been trained in the BSA leadership course
- I regularly volunteer to support my community
- I have pushed for stopping budget cuts in the music and arts / electives departments.

I’ve got a plan:
- I will work with both schools administration and the board to get policy that the students want passed, passed. By working with schools themselves, I can get things such as cell phones allowed at lunch because each school controls their own policy on that, while working with the board to get larger legislation passed such as rebuilding some of the older, crumbling, schools in the county.
- In addition, I plan on expanding communication through town halls, school visits, monthly town halls in different parts of the county, social media, the SMOB minute, websites, etc.
Q1. Why did you decide to run for SMOB?
When I was in seventh grade, former SMOB, Matt Post, won. This got me interested in the SMOB position, because a man who grew up going to the same middle and high school as me won. Over the years, I have talked to hundreds of students. What I found was that many people don’t feel they’re views have been heard. I wanted to help them, but I didn’t know how. I decided to run for SMOB, not because I wanted to, but because I wanted to help people. My goal as SMOB is to get everyone’s views heard.

Q2. The student Member of the Board of Education recently acquired a vote on the MCPS budget. If you could allocate ten million dollars anywhere in the budget, where would it be and why?
1. Improving education: Education is what makes a school district a school district. I plan on expanding test prep programs for SAT, ACT, and AP tests. I will fight for increased elective choices and career pathways.
2. Improving infrastructure: In no secret that some of our middle and high schools are crumbling. As SMOB I will fight to get these schools rebuilt. I will rework water pipe systems to lower the lead levels in MCPS water fountain to as close to 0 as we can get.
3. Improving technology: I will overhaul our broken chromebook system, update security systems in schools, replace broken down busses with zero emission hydrogen fuel cell busses, and work with schools to get cell phones in all schools.

Q3. What are your top three goals for your term? What steps would you take to achieve your goals?
$4,000,000 to go to rebuilding and updating our crumbling schools.
$2,000,000 to go to start replacing our busses with zero emission, hydrogen fuel cell busses.
$2,000,000 to go to continuing to update water fountain systems to lower lead level, which will also make them taste better.
$1,000,000 to go to updating our schools security systems with the newest, most reliable, system.
$500,000 to go to increasing the budget for music, arts, and other elective programs. This will help slow, or stop budget cuts to these essential programs.
$500,000,000 to go to test prep programs for SAT, ACT, and AP tests.

Q4. How will you ensure clear communication with the students of MCPS?
In order for a SMOB to be successful, there must be strong communication between the students and the SMOB. Good communication between the students and the SMOB can ensure that the students’ voices are heard. Throughout next year, I plan to find innovative solutions to ensure good communication between the SMOB and the students. I’ll work with you through frequent in-class visits, and monthly town halls held in different areas of the county each time. I will expand the use of the SMOB minute, social media, live streams, websites, and other platforms. My top priority as SMOB is to listen to you and make your voice heard, so we can bring positive change for everyone in the county.
Personal Profile
Ever since elementary school I have been an advocate for better education for students and a leader in my community. I was a member of my school’s SGA and I have held various leadership positions in school, sports and boy scouts. I’ve been a member of SMOB campaign teams in the past and was a delegate for my school. I attended my school’s cluster meeting last year and saw first hand what can happen when our community comes together and our voices are heard. That day I became inspired to make a positive difference in our county. One of the most important characteristics that the SMOB needs to have, in my opinion, is to be able to effectively work in a team. As an athlete and a member of the youth orchestra, I see all we can accomplish when working together. As SMOB I will make sure we will be on the path towards a better tomorrow.

Q1. Why did you decide to run for SMOB?
I decided to run for SMOB so I can represent the student voice and work to solve problems on issues we face every day, such as infrastructure and mental health awareness. Being the son of a teacher in MCPS I’ve been around education ever since I was born. I’ve decided to run because I wanted to make a positive change for students in MCPS now and in the future.

Q2. What are your top three goals for your term? What steps would you take to achieve your goals?
The top three things I want to do as SMOB is make sure money is allocated to rebuild and modernize schools in need of repair, provide more access to student health and wellness programs, and increase funding for the fine arts. To accomplish these goals I will work with fellow students, staff members, administrators, and other members of the board to determine how to solve these problems.

Q3. The Student Member of the Board of Education recently acquired a vote on the MCPS budget. If you could allocate ten million dollars anywhere in the budget, where would it be and why?
If I could allocate ten million dollars anywhere in the MCPS budget I would use it to modernize schools. Our students deserve a safe, clean place for learning. Many buildings in our county are outdated and not able to house our growing population. To be the best, we need to have the best.

Q4. How will you ensure clear communication with the students of MCPS?
As SMOB I feel it is important to connect with all of our students across our county. I will make sure I am transparent in all communication. I will share the SMOB minute so students are aware of what their SMOB has been up to and they know their concerns have been addressed. I will also post on social media about all of the progress being made in our county.
Personal Profile
I’m Jay Wood, and I’m a junior and school president at Winston Churchill High School. However, I’ve been a student at different schools across the county, in the Blair, Wootton, and Churchill clusters. Because of my diverse range of experiences, I understand the problems that different groups of students face, and I have experience working to address these issues. In a divisive time with issues such as the boundary study, I know I’m the candidate to be a unifying voice across our student body. Working with Learn Serve, a non profit whose goal is to foster student led social change, I was asked a question, “what makes you mad?” and “what could you do to do to change this?” Throughout my life I’ve used painting as an outlet for stress, and I wanted to bring this useful tool to the most forgotten and disparaged people in our community: residents of homeless shelters. I did research and saw that painting is proven to boost productivity and treat mental illnesses, as well as increase happiness hormones. I started a for profit organization called Painting for Positivity that brings paint therapy workshops with food to homeless shelters across MOCO. I was able to give back to our moco community and paint with inspiring individuals. Some of them even told me their painting would be the first piece of furnishing in their new housing. I’ve also helped raise over 130,000 dollars for the non-profit Learn Serve to help fund student led social change all across the DMV. I have extensive experience with working to improve our schools, whether it was working to get composting in MCPS schools by sorting through the trash from my school’s cafeteria, or jumping into the Potomac river in the middle of January to raise money against climate change. As SMOB, I plan on bringing bold and innovative policy to the table that affects everyday students, because the goal of my campaign is to put you, the students, first. I want to seek out investments/sponsorships from large electric vehicle companies for electric school buses, and bring composting initiatives to all MCPS school lunchrooms. I’ve helped bring therapy dogs to my school and want to do this for all MCPS schools. I also have new ideas to address the achievement gap in our county. Studies show that the biggest factor in a student’s educational pathway is their surroundings in their earliest learning years. Lower income families whose parents are working hard to make ends meet may not have time to teach their young children something as simple as the alphabet, let alone prepare them for the rigor of MCPS. As SMOB I’d work to introduce an initiative bringing educational materials and books to these families so that we can address the root of the achievement gap. More importantly than all of my qualifications and policy ideas, I genuinely care about improving our community, and I will continue working tirelessly to fight for you and put students first.

Q1. Why did you decide to run for SMOB?
I’ve been a student in three different school clusters, and have seen my friends and fellow classmates all face very different issues- whether it was mental health issues, struggling to find a seat on the bus everyday, or finding representation in our curriculum. I’ve been a part of student led social change across the county, from being the student board member of an Educational foundation to running my own social venture aimed at addressing the mental health of Homeless Moco residents in creative ways. These issues are ours as students to voice and address. I’m running for SMOB because I’m done waiting for change, I want to be this change for our county.

Q2. What are your top three goals for your term? What steps would you take to achieve your goals?
I want every student, regardless of their school, to see a positive change in their everyday lives because of my term. The top three goals I’ve set for my term are sustainability, equity, and student wellbeing. I’ve been a part of composting efforts in my school cluster, and with the organization I’ve been working with, I’m hoping to bring this to every MCPS school. In the midst of a global climate crisis, this should be a priority for MCPS. There are huge achievement gaps in MCPS, and I want to provide low income families with more access to early education materials for young children, as these early years of development are what set a students academic path for the future. Lastly, I want to address student wellbeing, by implementing therapy dogs across the county like I’ve helped do at my school, and make school meals more filling and healthy.
Q3. The Student Member of the Board of Education recently acquired a vote on the MCPS budget. If you could allocate ten million dollars anywhere in the budget, where would it be and why?

A response to this question was not submitted to the Special Elections Committee by the required date.

Q4. How will you ensure clear communication with the students of MCPS?
A SMOB’s term doesn’t officially start until the fall. However, the day after the election, I plan on setting up SMOB text blasts for each school cluster so students can see the civic events near them, and hear more about what I plan on doing for them that week. I want to hold myself accountable to the students of the county, and listen to the specific needs of each school and student who reaches out. These both require effective communication with the student population. As I am now, I’ll be available through social media and make sure that everyone who reaches out to me has their voice heard. Lastly, I want to routinely come to as many school SGA meetings as possible. In order to make my term as effective as possible at making real change, I’ll need to hear from you, the student leaders of the county.
Information on the Special Elections Committee:

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**Student Leadership Coordinator**  
Shella B. Cherry  
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The Special Elections Committee is comprised of middle and high school students from across Montgomery County. This committee handles the logistical details for running the election of the Student Member of the Board of Education to include the Nominating Convention, early election day, and the official election day.

*The cover photo is from the 2019 Nominating Convention.*