

Testimony of the Fair Access Committee for the Western  
County Regarding the FY23 Capital Budget  
Link Hoewing, Chair  
February 8, 2022

Fair Access has focused its advocacy on changing county policies that have ignored the needs of our area and have resulted in inequitable treatment of our citizens. The lack of investment in our nearly 100-year-old school, the failure to build a community center for our citizens so they can have convenient access to county recreation, youth and seniors programs, and the lack of nearby access for the elderly and infirm to needed medical services are just some examples of the inequities in county policies our area has faced.

We are pleased that both the BOE and the County Executive have taken actions and proposed budget or policy changes that will begin to significantly address these failures. The Board proposed, and the Council approved last June, a reconstruction project for Poolesville High School. In early January, the Board voted to approve phase I of the two phase Poolesville High School construction project. The staff of MCPS also presented a plan to add \$30 million to the project using state supplied Build Back Better funds and to include in

the plans for the school the needed expansion and renovation of the gymnasium. The Board indicated that these changes will be implemented through a CIP or appropriations amendment to be submitted soon to the Council.

The County Executive's FY23 CIP budget includes specific funding for the development of a "Program of Requirements" or POR plan for the design and scoping of a proposed community center, possibly collocated with the rebuilt high school. A POR is required to ensure that a project can be proposed for construction funding and made a priority project. This move is, in effect, the first step in the process of funding and building the much-needed community center for the western county that we have advocated.

We thank the Council for its support thus far of our citizens through the approval last year of initial funding for the high school's reconstruction. We urge you to continue your support by approving the County Executive's FY23 funding for the high school, the amendment to the CIP to be proposed by the Board for the school, and the POR funding for the community center proposed by the County Executive.

While we know the POR is not done, we also believe the Council could signal that the Poolesville Community Center is a priority by designating it as such on the list of “Candidate Projects and Studies Underway/Planned for FY23” in the Facility Planning budget. If the center is to be collocated with the high school, its design and construction must begin very soon. It will need funding in the next Fiscal Year.

Thank you.