

Good evening, President Friedson, members of the County Council, and staff. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the CIP allocation for MCPS. My name is Jennifer Hardesty and I am a parent of a Twinbrook Elementary student and a Julius West Middle School student. I am testifying to request full funding of MCPS's request for the Fiscal Year 2025–2030 CIP.

The current FY24 Capital Budget has funds for the construction of a new school. Please do not allow MCPS to remove the planning and placeholder constructions funds for Twinbrook ES out of the FY Capital Budget. Twinbrook ES is a Title 1 and Community School. It is more than a school, but a source of help for the community. We have monthly free markets to provide food and clothing for the community. Our Community Liaison also helps to provide information for different programs and resources to help families in need. The school has become a pillar in the community. The school was built in 1952 and the last remodel was in 1986. We were approved for a revitalization/expansion project that was scheduled to be completed this year, but in 2018 we were removed from the list due to other schools having more of a need for improvement. If the funds are removed for Twinbrook, this will be the 2<sup>nd</sup> time we have been removed from having a revitalization/modernization and would be a great disservice to the community. Although we have had several improvements, including a new HVAC system and a new roof, there are still some issues that will need a revitalization to correct.

One issue is that the school is not ADA compliant according to the 2018 ADA Title II Assessment<sup>1</sup>. One issue is that there is no elevator or ramp to be able to get from the 1<sup>st</sup> floor to the lower floor where the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classrooms are. This has recently caused a medical concern when the nurse was unable to get to a student who needed a wheelchair. In order to accommodate a student in a wheelchair, entire grades have had to move classrooms to allow for wheelchair access. This is also a safety concern if a student in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade should be injured and would need to use crutches. It would be risky for a student to have to use the stairs while using crutches. In addition, there are issues with doorways being too narrow for accessibility and an inoperable chair lift. We want Twinbrook to be accommodating to everyone.

Another major issue is that there is no sprinkler system in the school. Sprinklers in buildings, including schools, have proven to not only save lives but reduce damage to the building and property. According to the NFPA 2021 research<sup>2</sup>, civilian fire death rates from 2015-2019 were 89% lower and injuries were 27% lower when sprinklers were present compared to no sprinklers. Flame damage was confined to the room of origin in 95% of fires compared to 71% of fires without sprinklers. This is the difference between students missing a few days or losing the school completely and having to relocate hundreds-thousands of students to other schools or another location. MCPS does require extra fire drills for schools without sprinklers, but drills do not consider smoke and low visibility nor the point of origin and panic could result in the event of a fire. Also, it is important to take into consideration special needs students. Sprinklers would contain a fire to allow students to exit the building safely and quickly.

Another concern about the current building layout, is that there are poor sight lines for security down the building's four wings which were added in the 1950's. This poses a security threat for the students and staff.

The school also continues to have issue with lack of space. The school is being considered for the Linkages to Learning program, but one factor is that there is a lack of space to accommodate the program. Expanding the school would allow for the program to further help our students and

community. Currently students are having to sit in hallways to accommodate small group and individual learning sessions. This is not ideal for learning and is also a safety concern.

We urge you to keep the funds already allocated for Twinbrook Elementary School. It would greatly benefit the entire Twinbrook community to have a safe, secure, comfortable, and attractive school.

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Nelson, "ADA Title II Assessment: Twinbrook Elementary School," EMG Engineering Project Number 123821.17R000-154.303, 29 October 2019, <https://ww2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/facilities/ada/reports/02206.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Shelby Hall, "NFPA Research, Fire loss in the United States", National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), November 1, 2023. <https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/research/nfpa-research/fire-statistical-reports/fire-loss-in-the-united-states>