

Cold Spring Elementary School – DuFief Elementary School
Fallsmead Elementary School – Lakewood Elementary School
Stone Mill Elementary School – Travilah Elementary School
Cabin John Middle School – Robert Frost Middle School
Thomas S. Wootton High School

**Capital Improvement Program Testimony to
Montgomery County Council
By Junhua Liu and Sumeet Sharma, MCCPTA Wootton Cluster Coordinators
February 6, 2024**

Introduction

Good evening, council members. My name is Junhua Liu, and I stand before you as a representative of the Wootton cluster, serving as one of its Cluster Coordinators.

We are here to emphasize the critical capital improvement needs of our schools and to urgently appeal for the fund and acceleration of projects at Thomas S. Wootton HS, Cold Spring ES, and DuFief ES. We implore you to commit to these projects without further delays.

While we have patiently respected the County's decisions regarding other clusters, our schools cannot endure prolonged neglect due to budget constraints. The time has come for Wootton cluster to receive the attention it deserves.

Thomas S. Wootton High School

Before delving into the specifics, I'd like to ask how many council members have visited Thomas S. Wootton High School in the past five years. If not, we extend an invitation to experience a school day firsthand, understanding the challenges our students and teachers face.

Thomas S. Wootton High School, over 50 years old, is one of only two high schools in the County that have never undergone major capital improvement. The issues range from a non-functioning HVAC system and unsafe air ventilation to leaking pipes and roofs, antiquated wiring, and inadequate safety equipment in science classrooms. Our students and staff navigate through broken facilities, including bathrooms that pose serious health hazards.

Of utmost concern is the faulty design of our congested and narrow front driveway, posing a daily safety risk. Last year, a student suffered a concussion after being hit by a car in front of the school. By the way, the accident was on the local news. We cannot afford to wait for a tragedy before taking action.

Despite the Americans with Disabilities Act being made in law over 30 years ago, Wootton HS still does not meet the minimum ADA standard. This lack of compliance affects the timely movement of handicapped students between classes and poses challenges in emergency evacuations.

Our students and teachers persevere in their academic pursuits, but these conditions raise significant concerns for both physical and mental well-being. Given the dangerous and unhealthy

conditions, we urgently request the acceleration of Wootton's CIP timeline and the approval of a designated fund for its renovation.

DuFief Elementary School

Turning to DuFief ES, a major expansion project was previously approved and scheduled to address overutilization and serious repairs but was unexpectedly removed from the CIP list. Since then, critical maintenance projects have been denied, and temporary fixes have been employed in anticipation of a larger approved project. While we appreciate the recommendation for a feasibility study for DuFief ES, we urge an accelerated and fully funded process with concrete action based on previous planning work.

Cold Spring Elementary School

For Cold Spring ES, while we appreciate the recommended major capital project and feasibility study, we emphasize the need for a broad scope and funding to address its unique characteristics. The open classroom concept and inadequate safety measures during severe weather or emergencies must be thoroughly addressed. Cold Spring must remain on the CIP list.

Lakewood Elementary School

Lingering issues at Lakewood ES, particularly water drainage problems and a crumbling playground, need immediate attention. The unsafe conditions render these amenities useless, and we cannot afford to wait any longer for their resolution.

Robert Frost Middle School

Finally, Robert Frost Middle School, built in 1971 without a major renovation since, warrants consideration for a future feasibility study.

Conclusion

In conclusion, years of prioritizing other projects over the Wootton cluster have led to aggravated circumstances and worsened conditions. We seek a commitment to full funding for our projects through completion and an accelerated timeline.

Smart capital improvements not only address immediate needs but also permit more efficient and greater utilization of our schools. This is a cost-effective approach, addressing these issues now rather than allowing them to escalate.

Montgomery County upholds its commitment to equity by addressing the concerns of all its communities. We, too, are a diverse community, and our children's educational and welfare needs are just as important as others. We request your support in ensuring the well-being of our students and the quality of their education.

Thank you!