

Capital Improvement Plan Testimony to Montgomery County Council

By Brooke Rickett, Cold Spring Elementary School PTA President

FY2027 – FY2032 Capital Improvements Program

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Good evening, Councilmembers. My name is Brooke Rickett, and I am the PTA President at Cold Spring Elementary School — and the parent of four children, all currently attending Cold Spring in fifth, fourth, second, and kindergarten.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge yesterday's tragic incident in our school cluster and hold the affected families, students, and staff in our thoughts. It is not easy to speak this evening — especially on the topic of school safety — in light of these events.

I am here tonight on behalf of a community that has been showing up for more than a decade. Cold Spring community members have testified year after year about our school's urgent facility needs. We have seen moments when Cold Spring was included in the CIP, only to see funding later withdrawn. **Tonight, we are asking you to make this time different — to follow through on the recommendation before you, fully fund the Cold Spring Elementary School project, and see it through to completion.**

I recognize the difficult budget decisions before you, and I appreciate the responsibility you carry. I'd like to briefly share why funding the Cold Spring project is so critical for our students and community.

Cold Spring is the last open-concept school in Montgomery County — classrooms without doors and walls. Teachers create makeshift barriers out of bookshelves and cubbies simply to define a space.

The result is constant noise distraction and real safety limitations. Voices, lessons, and hallway sounds blend together, making it difficult for students to focus, process information, and fully engage in learning. Imagine trying to teach reading comprehension while another class practices multiplication just a few feet away.

Beyond the daily instructional challenges, the layout also creates serious safety concerns. During drills, many students must move across open public areas to reach secure spaces. Yesterday, my 5th grader was in a storage closet with 36 students during a lockdown lasting more than 30 minutes. Our staff has done everything possible to adapt, but structural problems cannot be solved without walls and doors.

I want to thank Councilmembers Jawando and Friedson for visiting Cold Spring and seeing our building firsthand. Your willingness to walk the space, hear from staff, and observe the realities of the open-concept layout meant a great deal to our community. I would invite and encourage the other Councilmembers to visit as well, because seeing the learning environment in person makes clear why this project is so important for our students and community.

We respectfully ask the Council to fully fund the Cold Spring Elementary School project and move it forward to completion. Thank you.