

Public Hearing on Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) Operating Budgets – April 7, 2026
MCCPTA Central Area Clusters Testimony

WINSTON CHURCHILL CLUSTER • RICHARD MONTGOMERY CLUSTER * POOLESVILLE CLUSTER
ROCKVILLE CLUSTER * THOMAS S. WOOTTON CLUSTER

Presented by Amy Ackerberg-Hastings (Central Area Vice-President and RM HS parent)

Good evening, President Fani-Gonzalez, members of the County Council, and staff. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the county's operating budget allocations. My name is Amy Ackerberg-Hastings. I am the parent of a Richard Montgomery (RM) senior, and I serve MCCPTA as the Central Area Vice-President for the Churchill, RM, Poolesville, Rockville, and Wootton clusters. With respect to MCPS's Fiscal Year 2027 operating budget request, I am hearing **two areas of concern** from these communities.

First, while **many families are** broadly supportive of the funding needs at all levels of MCPS—and perhaps especially of providing a 3.25% salary increase to teachers and school staff, which barely keeps pace with inflation—they are also **worried about significant property tax increases** during a time of economic uncertainty. The Central Area communities are well aware of federal cuts that impact some of our most vulnerable students (FARMS, EML, special education). And, we know that state aid is decreasing as the Maryland Blueprint winds down¹ and as MCPS enrollment data suggests declines in student numbers. These reductions leave local authorities to bear a larger share of expenditures.² We expect that the Council will look for wiggle room in the County Executive's recommendation, since MCPS's FY27 request is \$202.8 million less than the Maintenance of Effort level and \$194.0 million less than the Spending Affordability Guidelines. Additionally, it is time to explore alternative funding sources, such as the public-private partnerships that have been proposed to address MCPS's massive capital projects backlog.

Second, we need the Council to hold MCPS accountable for how it spends the funds it is allocated. A **forensic audit** that goes beyond the annual checkbox exercise³ required by the state and federal governments is long overdue. Please direct OLO and OIG to determine where every penny goes and whether those funds are in fact contributing to career and/or college readiness for every child.

There are many reasons at present to be concerned about MCPS's priorities and values, and thus for the County Council to exercise strong oversight of our children's futures. Central Office's backsliding into obfuscation over the past year is inexcusable. It is exhausting and wasteful to launch new initiatives before previous projects and reorganizations, such as the Cross-Functional Leadership Teams, have been thoughtfully evaluated. Pouring millions into the poorly-conceived regional programs proposal—while downsizing longstanding, impactful, largely self-funded countywide programs at RM, Montgomery Blair, and Poolesville and eliminating the

¹ According to the [Current Fund MCPS](#) section of MCPS's page within the county executive's operating budget recommendation, the FY2025 level was \$39 million, while the projected allocation for FY2027 is \$26 million.

² According to the [Additional Documentation](#) section of MCPS's page within the county executive's operating budget recommendation, Montgomery County's portion of MCPS's total budget has started creeping up after dropping to a historic low of 63% as an aftereffect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

³ MCPS's FY2025 Financial Report is posted [here](#).

Downcounty Consortium’s academies that challenge and engage both average and exceptional students—demonstrates a lack of judgment as well as inattention to foundational educational needs at the elementary and middle school levels.⁴ Indeed, basic student proficiency is lagging throughout the county, and FARMS students continue to experience even worse outcomes than their peers.⁵ Even changes that are intended to help students, such as the Blueprint-mandated expansion of pre-Kindergarten classes to full-day offerings, are in fact reducing opportunities for early childhood education, as schools that formerly offered two half-day sessions, reaching 40 students, now have one full-day session that enrolls 20 students. MCPS is dragging its feet on choosing external mathematics curricula despite the changing requirements coming from the state. Even my spouse, who pays little attention to PTA activities or to local news, has noticed that MCPS does not publish standard measures such as student-teacher ratios. Instead of using the upcoming elementary boundary study as an opportunity to right-size schools, MCPS is strongly signaling that it plans to disproportionately close Title I and Community Schools, regardless of building capacity and student enrollment. In general, MCPS’s words and actions do not indicate its leadership is in fact committed to “all means all”; certainly, what the school system says and does frequently fails to align with my own principles.

As caregivers and taxpayers, the Central Area clusters deserve **granular information** about where the money is going in MCPS, so that families, communities, schools, and county government can be true **partners in stewardship**. Thank you for your attention.

⁴ Nine “red flag” examples of planning failures with the 6-region program model were outlined in [this parent-organized call for action](#).

⁵ A few representative statistics were shared in [this March 20 op-ed](#) by the MCCPTA education committee chairs.