"My name is Jean Johnston, and I'm Little Bennett parent. I appreciate the hard work each of you has done throughout this process. You've had a difficult job and have a difficult decision to make that will affect thousands of families.

Here's where we should all agree. Every child in Montgomery County has the potential to succeed. Every single child. Whether the child does not speak English, comes from a low-income home, lives with a single parent, two parents, grandparents, every child has the potential to succeed if they are given the support to meet their needs. The question is, how do we help every child achieve their full potential?

Let's ask ourselves - Does busing kids, from Germantown to Clarksburg and from Clarksburg to Germantown, out of their communities, with multiple Ride-On bus transfers for families, make the lives of those families easier, or burden them? Does busing kids to a different LOCATION, improve their circumstances? Will bused kids benefit from added resources, or are they being used to water down some percentage points?

Did you know that Route 355 goes down to a two-lane road and is gridlocked every morning and afternoon? There are daily arguments on Facebook about people cutting each other off as we all merge into one lane! This is the stress we deal with everyday living in Clarksburg. Besides cutting through neighborhoods, 355 is the only road to get from Germantown to Rocky Hill and CHS. Buses and thousands of parents will be passing each other back and forth on two-lane roads, every single day, without the infrastructure to handle more people.

If one purpose of this study is to "especially strive to balance demographics," shouldn't we also be "striving for the success" of our already diverse communities? Twenty years ago, my circumstances changed drastically, and suddenly, I was a FARMS kid in a rural Virginia high-school. Do you know what I needed? I needed the free psychological support provided by my school. I needed the free health clinic next to my school. These services will be coming to Seneca Valley, and now the idea is to bus kids, who can benefit most, away from these services.

Thanks to this board, Seneca Valley is going to be a state-of-the-art school with amazing academic programs and support services for its students. And right now, you are tasked with picking which communities will be excluded from those services and potentially left-behind even further. Meanwhile, Clarksburg High School will reach a 120% utilization rate, leaving me concerned about the quality of my kids’ education and their safety.

Also, to clear up any misconceptions, the reason the Clarksburg community chose geography over demographics in the survey is that we are already diverse, and we are PROUD of our diversity. The thing that impacts our daily lives is TRAFFIC. We live in an incredibly congested area, and it's only getting worse with new communities popping up north of us.

Thank you for allowing me time to speak. I understand there is pressure to equalize numbers, but please think about the real children and real families behind those numbers and how it will impact their real lives. Option 9 isn't perfect, but of the options left, it has the potential to do the most good.

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Jean Johnston