Thank you BOE members for allowing us this opportunity to testify today! My name is Kari Hill, and I am the Seneca Valley High School PTSA Secretary. We so appreciate all you’ve already done to make MCPS such an excellent school system. Being a part of a military family has given us the opportunity to live in many parts of the country, and our family chose to stay here in Maryland because of this great school system – even though we had the option to move back to HAWAII!

I also have to take a moment to thank you for our new Seneca Valley school building and facilities. We can already tell it is going to be a beautiful place for students to learn and for families to connect. It will be a lovely centerpiece to the Germantown community, and it is much appreciated.

I have a bit of an unusual perspective. Our family moved to the Seneca Valley cluster from the Bethesda Chevy Chase cluster 6 years ago. Our friends thought we were crazy to leave all the wealth and opportunities that BCC had to offer, but I trusted MCPS that the schools in other parts of the county would be just as amazing, and I was right. Our children are not only flourishing; they are thriving!

Even though our house is twice as far from Seneca Valley High School as it is from Clarksburg High School, we are thrilled to have our kids at Seneca Valley, and we have not complained about being bused to the farther school to help balance the demographics in the community. We love our neighbors, rich and poor, and we have seen the Seneca Valley family come together time and time again to support each other. We are SVproud for SO many reasons, and we truly believe that the testimonies here tonight should be about who GETS TO GO TO SENECA VALLEY since it will be even better in the new facilities.

Seneca Valley has much to be proud of. My daughters have enjoyed learning in Seneca Valley’s NJROTC, participating in varsity level sports and even serving as their class presidents. They have taken many of the AP and IB courses that are offered at Seneca Valley gaining them valuable college credits. They have especially enjoyed the Medical Careers pathway and the award-winning chorus program. And we know they have more to look forward to in the future.

Best of all, our family loves being a part of such a beautifully diverse community. We have gained valuable life lessons and dear friends from as many cultures as you can possibly imagine. While we will gladly welcome whichever new students that the Board votes to come to Seneca Valley next year, we appreciate Dr Smith’s boldness in recognizing this boundary change as an opportunity to bring a bit more equity between the Upper Montgomery County schools. Every student deserves the best opportunity to succeed, not just the ones with louder voices, more money or political clout.

I truly believe that Dr Smith’s recommendation is the best of all the options to meet the criteria of facility utilization, geographical accessibility and balancing demographics. We understand that whenever there is change, there is fear and frustration, but I have no doubt that our children are in great hands and that the Board will make every effort to help ALL of the students in MCPS have a similar and successful scholastic experience, and they will pave the way for a stronger Montgomery County.

Thank you for your time!