Good Evening Members of the Board of Education. I’m Louella Matarazzo, mom of a 4th grader at Clarksburg Elementary and a 6th grader at Rocky Hill. Like many Cabin Branch kids, my daughters about a year and a half ago; left their friends behind from their old neighborhood; and are adjusting to a new life at Clarksburg with new schools and new friends. As a first year student at Rocky Hill, my oldest has begun building connections with classmates from other neighborhoods- friends who unfortunately she may be leaving behind to attend Neelsville next year; her 4th school in 4 years. Many Cabin Branch students are on the same boat.

Approximately 100 Cabin Branch students take a bus to Rocky Hill today; and 74 to Clarksburg High School. It’s disappointing that no one has engaged or reached out to these students and our community beyond the informational town halls and the surveys. According to the surveys, 91% of Clarksburg voted geography was the most important factor; and I’ll tell you why. As residents of Upcounty, we deal with one of the worst commutes in the country with many of us commuting to DC and VA every day. This recommendation would place a major burden on our families who are already sitting in long periods of traffic to get to work, and will now have to do the same thing to travel to schools. This results in our kids sitting in busses for long periods and deprives them of sleep, their ability to participate in after school activities; and for us parents to be fully engaged at their schools.

This recommendation affects 2 communities (Cabin Branch and Boyds) that lack the infrastructure to support such long distances for students. 121 to Clopper is a winding, dark, and narrow road; and 355 is horrendous most days. If a student misses their school bus, it would take them over an hour on 2 busses to get to Seneca Valley from the Clarksburg outlets. Bottom line traffic, roads, and transportation are a major issue here and it’s only going to get worse with the upcoming 270-widening project and local officials agree.

What’s most upsetting is that when you had the choice on November 4th to put Option 9 back on the table- an option that was widely preferred by both Clarksburg and Northwest clusters based on surveys; that alleviates Clarksburg High School overcrowding better than almost any other option including the recommendation; that provides reasonable bus times for ALL kids; that provides some reduction in the FARMS rates for Neelsville; and that avoids 5 Elementary School split articulations; you didn’t. Why is that?

Board of Ed members- we are stakeholders in this process just as much as the other communities involved. I respectfully ask you to please look beyond the numbers; and truly consider the needs of all kids; including ours. Please put Option 9 back for reconsideration. All means All.