President Evans, members of the Board, and Dr. Smith, thank you for allowing me to testify today. I am representing the Clarksburg Elementary School PTA Executive Board.

While we understand that the main focus of the boundary study was to alleviate overcrowding at Clarksburg High School, it is important to note that there is overcrowding at Clarksburg Elementary School as well. There are currently 628 students in a school built for 311 students - that is 200% capacity and growing. Due to the accelerated growth in Clarksburg, we urge this board to open Clarksburg School #9 without further delay in 2022.

Parents from our community have shared stories and experiences of traveling in and out of Clarksburg on 270, 355, and Clarksburg Road and we urge this board to strongly consider the lack of public transportation and insufficient road infrastructures. Some students walk, take a bus, or rely on public transportation to get to school. With the superintendent’s recommendation, school bus rides will get longer and some students will no longer be able to
walk the distance. Additionally, students who are now attending Clarksburg High School have access to activity buses after school. Unfortunately, the activity bus only runs two days per week and many activities end after the buses leave. Seneca Valley, however, does not currently offer any activity buses. If the board removes students from their own communities for school, will there be funding to add activity buses for all students attending Seneca Valley who live in Clarksburg? If not, students who rely on alternative forms of transportation to get home would be unable to participate, creating an opportunity gap.

Throughout this boundary study, it has become more apparent to our community that some schools in Montgomery County do not have the necessary resources to increase student achievement. Neelsville Middle School lacks the safety and security and other tools that teachers and students need and deserve. All educators and students deserve to attend schools that are safe, foster a positive school climate that is conducive to teaching and learning, and have the resources they need. In a recent testimony, it was disheartening to hear students express the conditions they experience at Neelsville. We cannot stress the importance of Neelsville remaining on schedule for a new building in 2024, per the
Capital Improvement Plans, because even the current schedule is not soon enough.

We appreciate those board members who considered the return of Option #9 in the discussions. It was determined in two community meetings after the Superintendent’s recommendation was released, that the majority of Clarksburg Elementary School parents, based on geographic data and experience, support Option #9.

Thank you again for this opportunity.