Good evening Members of the Board of Education,
Thank you for this opportunity to speak.
My name is Sunita Warrier. I am the mother of a 6th grader in the Rocky Hill Middle School and a 2nd grader in the Clarksburg Elementary. I am also someone who has in the past, tutored kids one-on-one of the most severely resource-challenged schools in East Cleveland, Ohio. I have seen and felt the struggles of students faced with poor learning environments. ALL children deserve access to equitable learning environments. But children are also counting on us to make that access smooth and SAFE. And they are counting on us to make their well-being a top priority. And THIS is why I cannot support the Superintendent’s recommendation of Option 11a.

Because children’s well-being IS at stake with Option 11a. This Option puts more students on the roads for longer times. Roads with extremely HIGH volumes of traffic. At peak hours these roads MD 355, 270 and 121 are a commuters nightmare- distracted drivers, impatient drivers, construction, disabled vehicles and accidents in bumper to bumper traffic. And this is when the weather is nice! Now imagine this in rain and snow. And now imagine that into this mess Option 11a proposes to throw in more school buses as well. Not only will this add to a regular commuter’s agony, it also subjects more students to the torture of longer commutes. And no one who has actually had to sit through this traffic every day, would ever dream of doing that to children.

The school bus travel times that are being shown to you are inaccurate. They do not factor in the school bus speeds in high traffic or traffic delays. Also not factored in are the nearly 1500 new homes opening up in the community 2020 onwards- adding overwhelmingly more cars and commuters onto these roads. We are taking to the roads ever earlier in desperate attempts to cut commute times. How much earlier should kids have to wake up? How much time that they could be spending on homework or physical activity, will they have to spend on the roads? Please do not vote for Option 11a. It makes getting to and from school a miserable experience for more students.

Option 11a does NOT provide equitable learning environments for ALL kids. Just last week, you heard the testimonies of parents and students from Neelsville MS as they went through the laundry list of facility issues. They described ‘dangerously cramped hallways and stairwells, classrooms with little or no sunlight, insufficient bathrooms and uncomfortable classroom temperatures. Students expressed concerns for their safety and well-being. These are concerns that need immediate attention. It is sad that there have been so many delays in updating this 30 year old facility. NO child should have to study in these conditions. Option 11a merely moves one set of children from this facility that is in such a desperate state and puts another set of kids into that same facility. How is this providing an ‘equitable learning environment for ALL children’?

I understand that this boundary study is driven mainly to relieve overcrowding in our high schools and increase the socioeconomic diversity of our schools. There are options that can address this better. Option 9 does a far better job of relieving overcrowding in Clarksburg High School and it also increases the socioeconomic diversity of our schools without subjecting children to the turmoil of longer commutes. Please consider Option 9 or its variant. You have the power to do so.
I would like to add that we cannot escape the ironies of this exercise - new construction in our area continues despite overcrowding in our schools.; the Clarksburg and Germantown communities are some of the most socioeconomically diverse in the region and yet we are the first to be chosen in this diversity exercise, and it's very interesting that even with the stated priorities of this boundary study, increasing the socioeconomic diversity of the Northwest School Cluster does not seem to be a priority at all.

We are trusting you to do right by ALL kids. And we hope ALL means ALL. Please don’t let going to school, be a miserable experience for them. Please put Option 9 back on the table.

Thank you,
Sunita Warrier