Good evening Superintendent Smith, President Evans, and Members of the Board, I am Sarah Kessler testifying on behalf of Torie Rodriguez, Northwest Cluster Coordinator.

The Upcounty is eagerly anticipating the opening of the new, expanded Seneca Valley High School next fall. The school will not only provide an amazing new facility and state-of-the-art programs, it will also bring much-needed capacity relief to Clarksburg and Northwest High Schools. Specific discussion about this will be contained in the boundary testimony.

**Elementary School Addition Projects**

**Ronald McNair ES**

Ronald McNair Elementary School remains dramatically over capacity. Their enrollment this year is 830 students, 200 over their capacity of 626. Projections are for McNair to remain more than 200 students above capacity for the entire five-year planning period. Seven portables cover the majority of their blacktop once utilized for recess, necessitating logistical changes to their arrival and dismissal procedures. The McNair community is greatly disappointed that their scheduled addition was delayed another year to 2023 and request that the recommended funds to begin the planning of the addition be allocated this year.

**Clopper Mill ES**

The FY2021 Capital Budget does not recommend funding for an addition for Clopper Mill ES. The population this school year is 530 students in a building with a capacity of 460, 70 students over capacity. The Superintendent’s boundary study recommendation reassigns the “Clopper Mill Island” from the Northwest to the Seneca Valley Cluster. The island currently contributes a total of about 50 students to Clopper Mill. Clopper Mill is contiguous to Christa McAuliffe ES which had an addition completed this past summer. McAuliffe now has a capacity of 770 with only 560 students, over 200 available seats. The McAuliffe population is not projected to grow and in fact remains about 225 seats under capacity for the entire five-year planning period. Instead of funding an addition for Clopper Mill, the
island population reassigned to the Seneca Valley Cluster could attend McAulliffe which is two miles closer to them than Clopper Mill and would be a straight articulation for all students from McAulliffe to Roberto Clemente MS to Seneca Valley HS. This is a logical, cost saving solution which would ease overcrowding and eliminate the split cluster articulation of Clopper Mill ES.

In addition to 225 available seats at McAulliffe, Waters Landing ES remains 125 seats under capacity for the entire five-year planning period. Thus, the Seneca Valley Cluster currently has 350 available elementary seats. The current Upcounty Boundary study has demonstrated the need to move students across cluster lines when necessary to redistribute capacity between schools. All capital projects that result in increased capacity should initiate a boundary study to see if overcrowding in nearby schools can be eased, regardless of cluster.

**Diamond ES**

Diamond Elementary School’s addition was completed in 2017 but their portables were never removed. Diamond is projected to remain 150 students over capacity throughout the five-year planning period. Currently, there is no plan to address this but we ask that MCPS remain thoughtful of ways to relieve the school in the future, possibly in the boundary study for the new Dufief ES (which should include all nearby elementary schools), Crown HS, or the Countywide Boundary study.

Another issue at Diamond is their articulation pattern. This year Diamond has 105 fifth graders: 100 of them will promote to Lakelands Park MS followed by Northwest HS and only **five** students will articulate to Ridgeview MS and Quince Orchard HS. In fact, for the past decade, Diamond has sent approximately 5 students a year to Ridgeview while the other 95% of the class goes to Lakelands. This boundary decision was years ago, so I am not sure why one street was carved out of the Quince Orchard Cluster across Great Seneca Highway. In addition to the overcapacity issue, this imbalance should be addressed in the future. I cannot imagine my child having to go to middle school essentially alone at a stage in their life when relationships with their peers are so critical.

**HVAC NEEDS AT OUR SCHOOLS**

**Ronald McNair Elementary School**

Ronald McNair was built in 1990 and has never had its HVAC system evaluated for replacement. A previous request to replace the aging system was postponed and is badly needed at this time. The original in-class HVAC units are not effective at controlling room temperature; the school must frequently open windows to regulate classroom temperature. McNair requests to be considered for HVAC renewal as soon as possible.
Matsunaga Elementary School

Matsunaga/Longview still does not have an updated HVAC system, which has been requested for many years. The unit experiences frequent programming issues after thunderstorms, it is knocked offline and then programs must be reloaded. Matsunaga/Longview was the first school to use geothermal and other schools have followed but changed format such as locating heat pumps in closets rather than in the ceiling.

The current geothermal field cannot keep up with providing enough cooling for the building from spring through fall. Inconsistent room temps are pervasive throughout the building. Proper temperatures are essential for the medically fragile students in Longview who cannot tolerate extreme temperatures. Matsunaga staff reported that MCPS spends $5,000 a week renting a portable chiller to ensure the building stays cool. They request a cooling tower to resolve this issue.

Conclusion

Before I conclude, I would like to request that MCPS bring back the “At A Glance” data sheets for individual schools. This information is utilized by Cluster Coordinators, parents, school staff and administrators, and even Board of Education members. In fact, in recent discussions it was revealed that Board members were not informed that they were no longer being updated, the last year available is 2017-2018. I have heard MCPS staff claim that this “point-in-time” data is not useful, but I respectfully disagree. In one sheet we can see enrollment by grade (to identify trends), FARMS and ESOL rates, race/ethnicity percentages, specialty programs, capacity projections, and articulations. The sheets are still prominently featured front and center on the MCPS Schools webpage. I’m sure the data dashboards are helpful in their own way but please consider them as an addition to the At A Glance. This easily accessible data is still strongly desired by the MCCPTA Board of Directors.

We appreciate the recommendations of the Superintendent to address our capital needs and thank you for the difficult choices you make for the education of our children.

Sarah Kessler on behalf of Torie Rodriguez
2019-2020 Northwest Cluster Coordinator