Dear President Evans and Board of Education Members,

I am Barrington Burnett, a concerned parent of a 5th grader at Gibbs Elementary and an 11th grader at Clarksburg High School. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to have our voices heard. It is evident that the Superintendent’s recommendation does not achieve its core mandate of relieving overcrowding at the high schools and does very little to advance educational goals in the affected communities. While I commend the careful deliberation the superintendent took to come to recommendation I believe that he tried to pick the best out of a set of what I consider very flawed plans. At the end of this process the Board of Education will be asked to pick winners and losers since the fundamental deficiencies remain unresolved and the prescribed changes all but guarantees that we will be here again very soon. It is with this in mind that I encourage the members of the Board to reject the recommendation in its current form.

When rolled out the boundary study was initiated to develop plans to address the overutilization of Clarksburg and Northwest High schools. In achieving the goals of the study, it was recommended that demographic characteristics, geography, utilization, stability of school assignment and stakeholder input were essential guard rails to process. We realize that the growing enrollment at our high schools is not sustainable. Our community overwhelmingly supported option 12 (and later offered modifications to make it more compliant) because it did as much as option 11a to relieve the overcrowding at the high schools but with the least amount of geographical upheaval. A close examination of the decision making drivers behind the current recommendation demonstrates that there are very limited in scope with potentially catastrophic effects down the line.

**Facility Utilization**

The Superintendent’s recommendation does not accomplish the primary goal of study. Both Clarksburg and Northwest will remain overutilized throughout the transition and close to 120% utilization by year six. Seneca Valley will be at 99% utilization with no further room to grow. So, this recommendation punts on the most pressing issue and provides no contingency plans for Clarksburg in the out years.

**Geography**

As stated in the superintendents report the proposed changes increases the commute for Gibbs Elementary cluster. While the Superintendent points out that the additional commute time will not substantially increase transport operating budget he fails to provide analysis on the impact on families who don’t drive to participate in school activities or functions. Also missing in the assessment is the undue burden placed on student who participate in after-school activities as these buses are not provided every day and the longer routes mean more times spent commuting.

**Demographic Characteristics of Student Population**

Based on the racial and ethnic makeup of the schools the superintendent made it very clear that all the schools are already very diverse. A secondary goal was then to improve the High schools FARMS. However, the FARMS numbers are relative unchanged for Clarksburg (+1%) and Northwest (+0.9%) and only slight improved at Seneca Valley (-5%).

The recommended changes would reduce the Neelsville FARMS numbers by -13% but almost doubles the Rocky Hill numbers within the first year of implementation.
Stability of School Assignment Over Time

Given that both the High school and Middle schools are projected to be above capacity even after the roll out of this recommendation it is clear that the communities will again be asked to undergo another boundary study and realignment in the very near future.

Stakeholder Input

The roll out of 14 options without a systematic mechanism to whittle down the choices meant there was never a chance for consensus building. The input of the Gibbs Elementary School cluster was discounted.

In summary, the superintendent’s recommendation does little but to change the current trajectory of the schools involved in this study. The challenges we face are stark but not insurmountable. Putting off serious solutions will only compound the issues later. After watching the testimony of the Neelsville MS students last week it is clear that no student in our community should be subjected to those conditions and no plans should be implemented without short term and long term contingencies. I implore the Board of Education to reject the proposed recommendations and not make temporary plans that will have adverse permanent effects on the current students and communities.

Sincerely,

Barrington G. Burnett