Greetings to the Board of Education, Board President Evans & Dr. Jack Smith,

My name is Ennie Okusanya and I am a proud mom of 11 years old Adekoya, 6 years old Temi & 20 months old Sade. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify in front of you today. I truly appreciate your hard work for the betterness of our children’s future. I am here today as a parent who is concerned about the future stability of our children. As a parent and a PTA board member, I am here today to ask you to rethink your decision in moving our children to Germantown when their place of residence is Clarksburg. Each diverse family especially in Cabin Branch and Boyds chose this place for a reason - it’s stability for their family regardless of when the next call of duty will take place. When I moved here in 2014 with my family so that my husband can serve in the government, it was a difficult transition from Buffalo, NY (a small town called Amherst, New York to Maryland. As a mom to two sons, then a first grader and a newborn- who is now 6 years old in first grade at Clarksburg Elementary, it was not an easy transition for us because we knew that we just have to go when the federal government calls us to serve. There was a reason why I chose Clarksburg for my family- it’s for stability and proximity to our home.

I have researched that when there’s too much change for a child and no stability they tend to not function well academically. I chose Clarksburg Elementary for my son, Adekoya because it had the 311 capacity for students and there were only 267 children at the school. I knew that we have arrived home just like what he had always gotten use to in Amherst, NY. We decided to purchase our home in Cabin Branch rather than in Howard County or Silver Spring which was close to work for my husband and I. Clarksburg Elementary and Rocky Hill Middle School was the right size and place for my children’s school with the appropriate resources that he and his brother would need as children who suffer from severe allergy and respiratory depression.

We wanted our children to live close to their school. Now that I have my third child, I am in shock that my children will be relocated to Germantown due to what the county calls disparity in equity, geographic or demographic problems. In Clarksburg, there’s a diverse group of people who work hard and tries to give their family what they believe to be appropriate for them and their children. I do not understand when I see families being pulled from their community because the board feels that if they move kids from their neighborhoods to another neighborhood would resolve the problem of equity. What Montgomery County need to do is provide the children of Neelsville Middle School, Fox Chapel and Daly Elementary the correct resources at their school rather than move them from the community that they are stable with. And this goes for the children at Clarksburg Elementary and Rocky Hill. Not making too many changes for the children will provide them stability and safe haven for them to learn close to home. We never know when the next move will be.

Most parents who live in Clarksburg work far away from home because of the cost of living in Maryland, and they have to go through the hard commute from Silver Spring, DC, and even Virginia to get home from work. It will be difficult if parents will have to make a hard decision to find other alternatives on top of work and I-270 traffic stress for their children because they are
not close to home in the case of an emergency. For example, just two days ago, one of my Clarksburg Neighbor/ friend was willing to go to my son’s after care close to the school to help pick him up since I was caught up in traffic on I-270. I know I can count on them if my son have the respiratory depression that he usually gets. Now, if the children are moved to Germantown, which is usually about 20 to 30 minutes in traffic, I might not find a Clarksburg Village friend willing to go to the new school because their child is at a Clarksburg School such as Rocky Hill or Clarksburg High School and mine is not.

I am asking and pleading on behalf of my children and other children in our community that they stay at a Clarksburg school so they can continue to have a sense of community and the stability they need. I am asking the board to begin building Clarksburg Elementary Cluster #9 that was initially scheduled or proposed to open in 2019 based on the projection in 2014. I moved here because I thought Clarksburg Elementary will be a 311 capacity, and that the new elementary school will be opened by now.

We are taxpayers! We request and demand that the Board of Education and Montgomery County do not treat us like we do not have a say or voice just because they would like to decrease FARMS rate at Neelsville Middle School. Moving Cabin Branch & Boyds children to Neelsville will not decrease the FARMs rate significantly, but by about 2.7%. This issue of high FARMS might occur again. MCPS should provide Neelsville Middle School cluster a better learning environment for the children so they feel safe in their school and have a sense of stability rather than bussing them to Rocky Hill and bussing the Clarksburg children pass their home school to Neelsville.

If anything at all, keep Cabin Branch and Boyds children where they are or consider option 9. Option 11a is not the solution. Thank you for considering keeping Clarksburg children together for stability and proximity to their home. I know you can do this because you did it for the Aurora Hills and Clarksburg Village family. You considered building Hallie Wells and Snowden Farm Elementary so they are close to their home. You did not consider moving them to Neelsville for their overpopulation and they are closer to Neelsville. How about you do the same for the sake of equity for the Cabin Branch and historical Boyds family? There’s land and more homes are being built, but not enough land for a new middle school?

Thank you for your time.

Please consider the benefit of a small school in a small community:  
http://www.nea.org/home/13639.htm
*** What are the benefits of small schools?

An extensive amount of research indicates that there may be many benefits from smaller learning communities (Supovitz & Christman, 2005; Howley, et al., 2000). The most important benefits include: Raised student achievement; Increased attendance; Elevated teacher satisfaction; Improved school climate.