November 12, 2019

Montgomery County Board of Education
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD  20850

Dear Honorable Members of the Montgomery County Board of Education:

On behalf of Senator Brian Feldman, Delegate Lily Qi, and myself, I would like to thank the Montgomery County Board of Education (BOE) for addressing the issues that affect the education and welfare of our students. We share your commitment to the residents of Montgomery County and always encourage our constituents to contact us regarding the important issues that impact their families and communities. Recently, we have been contacted by many concerned residents of the communities in the Upcounty regarding the impact the boundary study and results will have on their children. It is our understanding that the BOE will have the opportunity to listen to these concerns at the hearing and we are confident that it will continue to work towards a sensible solution that aligns with the needs of the Upcounty communities while supporting the broader needs of the school district.

Of utmost concern to us is the effect that extended travel time will have on our student’s success in school. The Upcounty, as well as points North, is experiencing incredibly rapid residential growth without the commitment for traffic relief measures. There are currently 259,000 vehicle trips per day on I-270. These numbers adversely impact our ancillary roads because I-270 was not designed to handle this volume. A minor traffic incident or inclement weather is enough to cause major delays on I-270 as well as massive influx of traffic and congestion on our ancillary roads. Among the roads most impacted by this congestion are 355, Clarksburg Rd, Barnsville Rd, Clopper Rd, West Old Baltimore Rd, and Brink Rd. M-83 is in the County Master Plan for development in the Upcounty and would provide some relief. Unfortunately, there is no political will from the County to build M-83, nor the expansion of 270. The possibility of widening 355 between Father Hurly Blvd and Clarksburg is years away, under ideal circumstances. Our roadways are already stressed from moving all of these people and
goods around the Upcounty let alone thousands of school children in the middle of morning rush hour. Delayed arrivals to school and extended travel times could become the new normal for these students and may discourage them from participating fully in any school activities. The unpredictability and severity of traffic issues should be a major consideration when finalizing the results of the boundary study. School bus transit for our students will be unpredictably impacted, as will parent pick-ups and drop-offs. This will result in countless hours in traffic and extremely frustrated parents and students. These unknowns will get much worse as more homes are built both in Montgomery County and points North.

As always, we appreciate the leadership the BOE provides to keep Montgomery County planning for the future. We urge your continued commitment to our students with the careful consideration of the impact your decisions will have on the lives of the families in the Upcounty.

Sincerely,

Delegate David Fraser-Hidalgo, District 15