Good evening. My name is Dr. Jennifer Jones. This is the 3rd year in a row I am asking you to fund the addition to Lake Seneca Elementary School as planned 5 years ago. I have attached my previous testimonies sharing how I’ve been connected to the school since it was built in 1985. I grew up and live down the street. My mother was a teacher when it opened and it is my 7th year as the School Counselor there.

Lake Seneca is the 3rd oldest elementary school in Germantown. Germantown has grown to around 100,000 people since 1981 when I saw mostly cornfields and cows. Lake Seneca became a Focus school with smaller class sizes in kindergarten through second grade causing the demand for more classrooms. Nine portables were added which is one of the highest numbers in MCPS. I watched Waters Landing, McNair, and McAuliffe be built after Lake Seneca. They all received additions already. McAuliffe has 200 empty seats because they have 550 students and space for 770.

Thank you, Dr. Smith, for including Lake Seneca in the FY20 budget Amendments last year to begin planning for the addition. Now we need to move ahead. All 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade classes are in 9 aging portables outside of the building. We have 507 students, including 106 in our PEP and Pre-K program. For K-5 students, there are 207 students outside in portables which is 52%. Seneca Valley H.S., where I graduated in 1988, will attract more families to their new building. I am very concerned about the population growth that will result at Lake Seneca.

I asked students what they think of the portables and they said:
“They are so small you can barely get up out of your seat to move around. It is really crowded.”
“It is dangerous outside. Anything could come in the building or portable and you could get hurt.”
“It is disappointing the walls are so thin that when there’s a loud class next door and noise outside at recess kids can’t focus and get a good education.”
“We can’t always hear the P.A. announcements in the portables or outside.”
“Using the bathroom takes too long especially when it is an emergency because you have to use the pass to get into the building and walk around 2 hallways.”
“The Wifi for Chromebooks and the AC and heat don’t work all the time.”
“The portables aren’t as nice because the doors are always locked so we can’t easily get inside the room or the building.”
“The weather makes it really hard and the temperatures in the portables are too hot or too cold because the AC or heat doesn’t work right.”

Staff said:
“The neighborhood bike path cuts between the building and portables where anyone can go. I don’t feel safe.”
“There are too many students with access to outside. There are blind spots so we can’t monitor them.”
“There are smells and damage in the portables because there is always a mold or mildew problem.”

We must build the addition to Lake Seneca so our students have a much better learning environment. When Dr. Smith says, “All means all,” for Germantown I don’t think he meant, “All except for Lake Seneca.” Please fund the addition. Thank you.

email: Jennifer_Ann_Jones@mcpsmd.org
Good evening. My name is Dr. Jennifer Jones and I am here to speak about the critical need for Lake Seneca Elementary School to receive funding for the addition to the building previously proposed 4 years ago as part of a feasibility study for a future CIP budget.

I moved to Germantown in ‘81 and lived there until I became a teacher in ‘94. I grew up down the street from where Lake Seneca Elementary School was built in 1985. The only 2 elementary schools in Germantown before ‘85 were Germantown and Fox Chapel where I was a student. Lake Seneca is the 3rd oldest elementary school in Germantown.

My mother was one of the first teachers hired at Lake Seneca when it opened. As a result, I have been involved in the school for over 30 years. I volunteered in my mother’s classroom after school as a student at MLK and Seneca Valley. Later, I was a substitute teacher at Lake Seneca from ‘92 to ‘94. I moved back to the school community in 2012 and this is my 6th year working at Lake Seneca as the School Counselor.

Over the past few decades, I have seen tremendous growth and change in the community which has seriously impacted the school’s enrollment leaving a severe shortage of space in the building. It became a Focus school several years ago which led to smaller class sizes in kindergarten through second grade causing the demand for more space.

On September 29, 2017, Dr. Smith wrote a letter to County Councilman Roger Berliner and listed Lake Seneca as one of the schools included in the CIP budget for FY19. We were later removed from that list. Thank you, Dr. Smith, for including Lake Seneca in the recent FY20 budget Amendments to begin the actual planning for the addition to address growth. Our enrollment has gone up by about 100 students since I started working there in 2013. Currently, all 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade classes except one of each are in portables outside of the building. With a total of 514 students, 94 of whom are in our PEP and Pre-K programs, this means that of our K-5 population we have 135 students, or 32%, outside the building in portables which is one of the most in the county.

Not only is there no space for our students, but there is also a serious shortage of space for our staff. We have 2 Special Educators and a paraeducator sharing a room, the Staff Development Teacher shares with the Reading Specialist, and 4 ESOL teachers share a room. All of these rooms are approximately 1/2 to 2/3 the size of a regular classroom. It’s nearly impossible for 4 ESOL groups to effectively learn at the same time in the same room.

As the new Seneca Valley HS building is set to open in a few years allowing twice the student enrollment, we are also concerned about the impact it will have attracting further growth in our community.

I do not know how we are expected to meet the needs of our students when we crowd so many students into small spaces. These are not effective settings for successful learning. We must build an addition to Lake Seneca so our students and staff have a much better environment where all of our students can thrive.
Good evening. My name is Jennifer Jones and I am here to speak about the critical need for Lake Seneca Elementary School to receive the funds for the addition to the school building previously proposed 3 years ago as part of a future CIP budget.

I originally moved to Germantown in 1981 and lived there until I became a teacher in 1994. I grew up down the street from where Lake Seneca Elementary School was built in 1985. The only 2 elementary schools in Germantown before 1985 were Germantown and Fox Chapel where I was a student. Since Lake Seneca was the first elementary school to be built in Germantown after many years of only having the other two, it one of the oldest elementary schools in the area.

My mother was one of the first teachers hired at Lake Seneca the first year the school opened. As a result, I have been involved in the school for over 30 years. I came to my mother’s classroom after school often to help in junior high and high school, I volunteered in high school to help the instrumental music teacher there, and I was a substitute teacher there from ‘92 to ‘94. I moved back to the school community 5 years ago and this is my 5th year working at Lake Seneca as the School Counselor.

Over the past few decades I have seen tremendous growth and change in the community which has seriously impacted the school’s enrollment leaving a severe shortage of space in the building. It became a Focus school several years ago which led to smaller class sizes in kindergarten through second grade causing the demand for more space.

On September 29, Dr. Smith wrote a letter to County Councilman Roger Berliner and listed Lake Seneca as one of the schools included in the CIP budget this coming fiscal year.
We must put Lake Seneca back on that list. Our enrollment has gone up by about 100 students since I started working there in 2013. Currently, all 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade classes except one are in portables outside of the building. With a total of 539 students, 95 of whom are in our PEP and Pre-K programs, this means that of our K-5 population we have 197 students, or 44%, outside the building in portables.

Not only is there no space for our students, but there is also a serious shortage of space for our staff. We have 4 ESOL teachers sharing one room. There are 2 Special Educators and a paraeducator sharing a room and the Staff Development Teacher shares with the Reading Specialist. All of these rooms are approximately ¼ to 2/3 the size of a regular classroom with the exception of the arrangement of our Math Specialist and two Intervention teachers who share a full-sized classroom space. We also have part time art and music teachers who have to go room to room using a cart since they don’t have a space of their own.

I do not know how we are expected to meet the needs of our students when we crowd 28 to 29 of them into portable classrooms which in and of itself leaves a lot to be desired as an effective classroom setting for successful learning. We must build an addition to Lake Seneca so our students and staff have a much more effective environment in which all of our students can thrive.