



DATE: February 19, 2009

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT THE SENATE AMENDMENTS TO RESTORE EDUCATION FUNDING IN HOUSE BILL 1600**

TO: Conferees on HB 1600

FROM: Churchill Road Elementary School PTA, McLean, VA

The cuts to education funding in the House version of House Bill 1600 will harm the public school system and will prolong Virginia's economic downturn and constrain future success. We strongly urge you to accept the Senate amendments that would restore full funding to public schools.

The excellence of Virginia's public schools drive the Commonwealth's good reputation – and consequently, its tax base. As you know, Virginia schools are some of the very best in the country. You must realize how valuable headlines such as the following are: "Best High Schools: Virginia School Tops the Best High Schools List."¹ As a result, families want to locate in our state to have access to these schools, fostering a strong tax base that benefits the entire state. Moreover, the quality of our school systems also attracts high caliber principals and teachers, as well as many other employees. The excellence of our schools also attracts businesses to our state and the bright, well-rounded, talented graduates of the school system create a natural workforce for future business growth and educated citizenry. According to a recent *U.S. News and World Reports* article, economists estimate that the U.S. economy would grow by 4.5 percentage points over 20 years if Americans caught up to math and science education levels in other countries.² State budget cuts to public schools will harm the State's economy in both the short- and long-term.

In Fairfax County, a proposed FY 2010 school budget has been presented to the County for its review and consideration. We are very concerned about the County's proposed budget cuts, given the limited baseline resources our schools have (as evidenced by significant increases this school year in class sizes). Because of this and the expected **continued growth in Fairfax County's student body** in the coming years, **the additional cuts in House Bill 1600 would be catastrophic.**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the State budget plans for 2010 on behalf of McLean's Churchill Road School Parent-Teacher Association, which has over 500 members. The parents and teachers at Churchill Road School recognize that our public schools are a cornerstone of our communities. In this current budget crisis, it is vital that you ensure that public schools continue to have the resources they need to maintain their high quality and support the economic recovery. We strongly urge you to accept the Senate amendments that would restore full funding to public schools.

¹ *U.S. News and World Reports*, "The New High School Rankings Are Here." December 5, 2008. (<http://www.usnews.com/blogs/college-rankings-blog/2008/12/05/the-new-high-school-rankings-are-here.html>).

² <http://www.usnews.com/articles/education/high-schools/2008/12/04/how-to-solve-our-problem-with-math.html>, December 4, 2008.