



February 3, 2009

Delegate Margaret Vanderhye
Richmond Office (during session)
General Assembly Building, Room 708
P.O. Box 406
Richmond, Virginia 23218

[By electronic mail: margi@vanderhye.com]

Dear Ms. Vanderhye:

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 (CRS PTA), which has over 500 members. The parents and teachers at Churchill Road School, recognize that our public schools are a cornerstone of our community. The excellence of Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) drives Fairfax County's and the State's good reputation – and consequently, its tax base. In this current budget crisis, it is vital that you ensure that Fairfax County's schools continue to have the resources they need to maintain their high quality. We strongly urge you and your fellow state legislators to make public school funding a top priority throughout the budget process.

As you know, Fairfax County 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 system also attracts high caliber principals and teachers, as well as many other employees in the school system, that are vital to ensure that our children have the best quality education possible. 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. Reducing state funding will harm the school system and will prolong the economic downturn here and constrain future success. According to a recent *U.S. News and World Reports* article, economists estimate that the 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 schools will harm the State's economy in both the short- and long-term.

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.

A proposed FY 2010 Fairfax County school budget has been presented to the Fairfax County School Board for its review and consideration. Given the limited baseline resources our schools already have (as evidenced by significant increases in class size at the elementary and other levels) and the expected continued growth in Fairfax County's student body in the coming years, we remain very concerned about the decreases in funding proposed in this budget, as well as the potential for other budget cuts.

We look forward to working with you, your fellow legislators, the County Board of Supervisors, and the School Board as they examine and evaluate budget proposals. We recognize the difficult budget crisis being faced by the State and the efforts to craft a proposed budget that limits cuts to avoid substantially undermining the quality of education. Nevertheless, we want to emphasize how important we believe ensuring full funding for FCPS is to our children, our community, and our state.

We at the CRS PTA recognize the challenges that you, the State, and County governments face. Nevertheless, we strongly encourage all of you to do everything possible to support the quality of education, which is the cornerstone of the State's own reputation and prospects for growth.

Sincerely,



Eric Malès
CRS PTA President



Cat Lippmann
CRS PTA Vice President