

PTA COUNCIL TESTIMONY TO THE BOE REGARDING HCPSS FY08 OPERATING BUDGET –JANUARY 25, 2007

Good evening. PTA Council of Howard County thanks the Board and the Superintendent for this opportunity to speak with you. On behalf of the PTA Council Executive Board and myself, we would like to wish all of you a Happy New Year. We look forward to collaborating and discussing with you, the issues and concerns of our general membership.

2007 promises to be an exciting year starting with the Superintendents Operating Budget. PTA Council is pleased to see the areas of Technology and Maintenance being given the priority that they deserve and hope that the Board will follow suit.

As we have witnessed over the past two years technology is of paramount importance in the maintaining and accuracy of student records and in the generation of both federal and state reports due to new policies and NCLB act. Technology touches all areas of education and will continue to be the driving force in education making the school system more and more dependent on it. Therefore, it is extremely important that the proper resources are allocated to this area of the budget. We don't want a repeat of the past. We should be moving forward in the direction of becoming the innovative leader in this area.

In the past, as budgets needed to be tightened the Maintenance Departments budget has always been slashed. As our schools are aging not only is it important to maintain them so that large sums of our future dollars are not spent on costly renovations but rather spent on educational instruction and recognize the importance of maintaining a "healthy and safe environment" for our students and staff. This reflects directly with the Superintendents Goal 2 for all of Howard County schools and in which National PTA is sponsoring a "Healthy School Day on April 30th", in which we look forward in collaborating with the department of education in walking through all of our schools to identify minor maintenance issues before they become major renovation issues. Council will have more information on "Healthy School Day" in the coming months and will keep you apprised.

Unfortunately, Council will not be able to testify at the Public hearing on the Operating Budget scheduled for February 1st due to the short time frame

between our Jan. 8th meeting and our Feb. 5th general membership meeting. This shouldn't preclude any PTA member from coming forward on their own behalf and testifying. Council will be submitting written testimony to the Board following our Feb. 5th Council meeting. At this time, Council would like the Board to consider for next year the possibility of pushing back the date for the public hearing till after our February general membership meeting so that Council can participate and present testimony at future public hearings.

Yesterday the Backpack Task Force Committee met for the first time. Each member received a copy of the Backpack Survey Report that I distributed to each of you at the Dec. 14th 2006 Board meeting, along with various research data put together by the CAC. It was a very productive meeting with many creative suggestions and ideas being discussed. I would like to thank my two fellow co-chairs Linda Rangos Coordinator for Health and Rose Marie Dennison CAC chair for their efforts in putting together a diversified group of respective community representatives, students, staff and health professionals and for their presentations. I believe that this committee will have some intriguing and exciting recommendations regarding this "weighty" topic.

Finally, after a serious discussion and suggestions with regards to the school Calendar and half days, our general membership put forth the following approved motion; The general membership would like the Board of Education to ask the Department of Education to study the possibility of having a more consistently scheduled time off. For example: In Arlington County, VA. Students have every Wednesday afternoon off; this time is utilized by the teachers for planning, class prep time, grading etc. and allows parents to plan for after school care in a more consistent manner. We are not suggesting that we do every week but to consider the possibility of every Third Friday or Fourth Friday or something of that nature. Our general membership looks forward to your response with regards to this motion.

Thank you.