



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

March 23, 2010

Montgomery County Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Patricia O'Neill, President, Montgomery County Public Schools Board of Education
Dr. Jerry Weast, Superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools

Dear Ms. O'Neill and Dr. Weast:

On February 3, the County Council held its first Town Hall meeting for students. We heard from many youth around the county about various issues, many of which were education related. Anna Brookes, a member of the Young Activist Club and 3rd grader at Piney Branch Elementary School, testified and spoke eloquently about the No Styrofoam Campaign at Piney Branch Elementary School.

As you know, Piney Branch Elementary School would like to eliminate the use of Styrofoam trays and plastic utensils by installing a dishwasher and purchasing a set of reusable trays and utensils for their school. The Young Activist Club first met with Councilmember Valerie Ervin, Chair of the Education Committee, regarding their proposal in May 2009. Councilmember Ervin wrote a letter to the Montgomery County Board of Education and the Superintendent requesting that Piney Branch be able to proceed with this pilot project. In June 2009, Dr. Jerry Weast replied in a letter that he was "willing to consider allowing the Piney Branch Elementary School Parent Teacher Association to pilot the use of paperboard trays providing that it pay the cost differential of about \$4,500." In December, Councilmember Marc Elrich discussed the issue with various members of the Board of Education, expressing his support for the project and willingness to help find a solution.

However, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) have indicated that they will not implement a dishwasher pilot program at Piney Branch Elementary.

A majority of the County Council believes that MCPS should allow this pilot to proceed so that we can determine whether using reusable trays and utensils can reduce our carbon footprint. Piney Branch Elementary School understands that there will be upfront costs including purchasing the trays, utensils and a dishwasher. They also recognize there will be increased labor expenses as well as incremental costs for water and electricity. The Young Activist Club has promised to absorb 100% of the expenses associated with this program and will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with MCPS. To date, the Young Activist Club has raised more than \$10,000 and they feel that this will adequately cover the additional costs mentioned above.



Ms. O'Neill and Dr. Weast
March 23, 2010
Page 2

We wish to stress the environmental and public health implications of this change. Polystyrene is made from non-biodegradable fossil fuels, and has a high carbon footprint, all of which negatively impact the environment. Polystyrene also has adverse effects on public health, as it is made from styrene, a known neurotoxin and suspected carcinogen.

By approving this pilot project, MCPS will have access to data and information that will allow them to make an informed decision about whether this is a viable option for other facilities in the school system. Additionally, the Young Activist Club acknowledges there would be no obligation to continue this program at Piney Branch or to implement this program elsewhere in Montgomery County. This is a win-win proposal for MCPS, Piney Branch Elementary School, and the environment. Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Valerie Ervin
Council Vice President – District 5



Marc Elrich
Councilmember – At Large



Nancy Navarro
Councilmember – District 4



Roger Berliner
Councilmember – District 1



George Leventhal
Councilmember – At Large



Duchy Trachtenberg
Councilmember – At Large

- c:
- Larry Bowers, Chief Operating Officer, MCPS
 - Joseph Lavorgna, Acting Director, Division of Facilities Management, MCPS
 - Suzanne Wood, Director, Division of Food and Nutrition Services, MCPS
 - Bertram Generlette, Principal, Piney Branch Elementary School
 - Bruce Williams, Mayor, City of Takoma Park
 - Jamie Raskin, Maryland State Senator, District 20
 - Sheila Hixson, Maryland State Delegate, District 20
 - Tom Hucker, Maryland State Delegate, District 20
 - Heather Mizeur, Maryland State Delegate, District 20
 - Essie McGuire, County Council Staff