

Resolution of the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations, approved by the General Council on March 26, 2008:

MVCCA-2008-EDUC-1

**Resolution of the MVCCA Education Committee Re:
Fairfax County FY 2009 Advertised Budget Plan**

WHEREAS the Fairfax County School Board (School Board) has approved a School Budget for Fiscal Year 2009 (FY2009 School Budget) which, for full funding requires a 4% increase in fund transfer (Requested Transfer) , and the Fairfax County FY 2009 Advertised Budget Plan (Advertised Budget), presented to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (BOS) on February 26, 2008, proposes no fund transfer increase (Proposed Transfer) which would under fund the FY 2009 School Budget by approximately \$63 million (Schools Shortfall); and

WHEREAS Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) has taken extraordinary measures to reduce its Requested Transfer in light of County revenue projections and guidelines (which had originally resulted in a projected deficit for FCPS of over \$100 million) including: (1) applying \$25 million identified at the FY 2007 Final Review and the FY 2008 Mid Year Review and \$25 million to be set aside at close of FY2008 from FY 2008 anticipatory reductions; (2) making budget reductions in excess of \$30 million including across the board departmental reductions of \$10.2 million (5%), reducing and streamlining summer school and specialized programs such as Young Scholars, reducing the numbers of Instructional Assistants (IAs), resource teachers, and technology assistants in elementary schools, and increasing class size; (3) continuing to hold discretionary baseline budgets and per-pupil spending at the FY 2007 level; (4) adding no new programs or new salary scale enhancements; (5) slowing progress on bringing full day kindergarten and Foreign Languages in the Elementary School (FLES) to all FCPS schools, all of which has resulted in the smallest Requested Transfer percentage increase in many years; and

WHEREAS after a few years of relatively flat overall student population growth, there was an unexpected and unbudgeted increase of about 1400 students in FY 2008, which, coupled with a now expected additional increase of about 1100 students in FY 2009, requires the FY 2009 School Budget to provide for an additional 2500 students, at a membership growth cost alone of \$14.4 million; and

WHEREAS in addition to the cost of overall membership growth, the FY2009 School Budget must also provide for those year to year cost increases which are largely outside the control of FCPS including (1) the continued growth in the percentage of students requiring additional staffing and/or services mandated by state and federal programs (especially non-English speaking, Special Education and/or economically disadvantaged) where the cost to educate averages at least \$3000 to \$7000 more per capita than other students, (2) increased Virginia Retirement System and other contributions as mandated by the Commonwealth and changes in accounting practices, (3) increased general insurance and health insurance costs as are being experienced nation-wide by both public

and private employers, (4) fuel and utility increases and (5) maintenance and replacement costs to preserve buildings and assets; and

WHEREAS the FY 2009 School Budget, exclusive of a 3% Market Scale Adjustment (MSA) for staff, includes only approximately \$6 million in discretionary resources, which are targeted at improving student performance and accountability by continuing at a slower pace the phase-in of full day kindergarten and FLES and the update of the SASI student information system; and

WHEREAS the FY 2009 School Budget provides for a staff MSA of 3% which is reasonable compared to the over 4% COLA to be provided federal employees and is necessary to maintain competitive position in the region and to attract, retain and fairly compensate the highly qualified staff which is critical to student achievement; and

WHEREAS the FY 2009 School Budget at best maintains the FCPS' per capita student cost in the mid-range of local jurisdictions according to the Washington Area Boards of Education FY2008 Report (WABE Report) and continues to reduce both the ratio of non-school to school-based personnel, and the already low percentage of administrative costs as compared locally in the WABE Report and nationally in other publications; and

WHEREAS FCPS, in order to produce the steep decline in the Requested Transfer from 8.81% in FY2007 to 4.6% in FY 2008 and respond to reduced County revenue projections, was not able to fund a number of programs needed to maintain and improve educational progress and protect assets including, but not limited to, needed technology replacement and enhancement, additional instructional coaches, additional school-based technology specialists, needs-based staffing initiatives to improve service delivery, and increased staffing of psychologists and social workers; and

WHEREAS FCPS in once again responding to County revenue projections has shrunk the Requested Transfer to a 4% increase by the many cuts and reductions delineated above but, given the unavoidable increases including membership growth, any Schools Shortfall may result in reinstituting those cuts and fees that were proposed by the Superintendent but reversed by the School Board in the FY 2009 School Budget as a result of public outcry and recognition of the needs of particularly economically disadvantaged children including but not limited to (1) Focus school funding; (2) Project Excel funds; (3) Reduction of bus eligibility; (4) Student Fees to participate in after school activities and sports; (5) Student fees to take AP or IB exams; and

WHEREAS for the reasons given above, any Schools Shortfall will likely also result in new and additional cuts to basic programs including potentially additional class size increases, further reductions in IA and other staffing, reduction or elimination of proven programs, and backward movement in the effort to compensate staff appropriately and maintain competitive salary structures; and

WHEREAS schools in the area represented by the MVCCA are among those most at risk and most heavily affected by the growth in population of students who require additional

services and staffing consideration, have benefited from increased resources as demonstrated by significant progress in achieving mandated benchmarks, and will require continued additional targeted resources if progress is to continue as mandated benchmarks rise; and

WHEREAS the FY 2009 School Budget and the taxpayers of Fairfax County continue to be affected by under-funded mandates of the federal government [among them the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)] wherein the cost of implementation and compliance far exceeds the assistance provided, particularly in view of steadily rising performance expectations while promised assistance continues to fall, and

WHEREAS the School Budget and the taxpayers of Fairfax County continue to be affected by the failure of the Commonwealth of Virginia to provide and fairly distribute adequate funding of its own Standards of Quality (SOQ) mandates and to fairly distribute sales tax revenue intended to be dedicated to education on a per student basis, with the result that FCPS receives state funding for only about 20% of its needs (compared with a 43% statewide average) and County taxpayers provide about 73% of school funding (compared with a local funding average of about 50% statewide); and

WHEREAS public education is a core mission of local government and the Supervisors have recognized that obligation in their historically strong support of the schools and have also recognized that the nationally-known quality of FCPS is a critical asset of taxpayers and a major contributor to the County's economic health and quality of life and to expectations for continued progress in the future; and

WHEREAS funding at a level below the 4% required by the FY 2009 School Budget would seriously erode the ability of FCPS to maintain, let alone improve, educational performance in the face of constantly increasing benchmarks and constantly changing demographics, as well as FCPS' ability to attract and retain the highly qualified professional teaching staff which is the linchpin of a successful educational system,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations, in consideration of all of the above, urges the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in adopting a Budget for FY 2009 to provide a transfer to Fairfax County Public Schools which is no less than a 4% increase over FY 2008, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations respectfully requests that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors consider additional transfers to Fairfax County Public Schools, particularly for reinstatement of programs and staff reduced or cut in the FY 2009 School Budget, for class size reduction to FY 2008 levels and/or for non-recurring expenses such as technology replacement and enhancement, should revenue growth, projections and competing considerations permit during the close of FY 2008 or the course of FY 2009.