

MVCCA-2010-EDUC-1

Resolution in Support of Full Funding of Fairfax County School Board FY2011 Transfer Request

- (1) WHEREAS the Fairfax County School Board (School Board) has approved a School Board's Advertised Budget for Fiscal Year 2011 ( FY2011 School Budget ) which requires an increase from FY2010 of 0.4% increase (\$81.9Million) in fund transfer from Fairfax County (Requested Transfer); and
- (2) WHEREAS the Fairfax County FY 2011 Advertised Budget Plan (County Advertised Budget), presented to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (BOS) on February 23, 2010, proposes an actual reduction from FY2010 levels of 1% or \$16Million (Proposed Reduced School Transfer), which would fail to fund the FY2011 School Budget by approximately \$98Million (Schools Shortfall); and
- (3) WHEREAS Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) for the fourth year in a row, and on top of those reductions already taken in FY2008, FY2009 and FY2010, has taken extraordinary measures to reduce its operational costs and Requested Transfer in light of economic conditions, County revenue projections and guidelines, and has reduced its FY2011 budget by about \$86Million by various means including, but not limited to:
  - (1) Eliminating all teacher and staff step increases and market scale adjustments (MSA) for the second straight year;
  - (2) Cutting central administration by an additional 5% on top of prior midyear reductions and prior year reductions, reducing central administration budget share to less than 1% (lowest in the region, and an approximately 36% reduction in ratio since 1991);
  - (3) Cutting school accounts by 5% and supplies and textbooks by 15%;
  - (4) Eliminating non-mandated after school and summer school programs and reducing funding for programs aimed at diverse populations, including Young Scholars, College Partnership, Project Excel and Focus Schools;
  - (5) Reducing staffing of assistant principals, office staff, psychologists, counselors and social workers;
  - (6) Further reducing effective compensation for teacher leaders by: the reductions in (4) above; eliminating tuition reimbursement; reducing contract lengths; eliminating Teacher Leadership programs and National Board stipend, all while expanding workload through class size increases and additional duties to make up for staff reductions in (5) above;
  - (7) Holding all baseline budgets to FY2007 levels, except for mandatory change;
  - (8) Reinstating student fees to take Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) tests; imposing for the first time student sports participation fees, and increasing parking fees (which will result not in fewer cars but in more students parking on neighborhood streets creating unsafe conditions for all); and

- (4) WHEREAS the FY2011 School Budget has no choice but to provide for an expected enrollment increase of at least 1760 students, on top of the largely uncompensated increases of 1400 students in FY2008, 3000 in FY2009, and 5000 students in FY2010, as well as to provide all mandated services for all students; and
- (5) WHEREAS the FY2011 School Budget reduces the per capita student cost to less than that in FY2008 and by about \$1000 compared to FY2010, falling further behind Montgomery County, Alexandria, Arlington and Falls Church and being nearly overtaken by Prince Georges, Manassas City and Loudon; and
- (6) WHEREAS the County and FCPS in the fall of 2008 and 2009 conducted a number of County-wide citizen dialogues (Dialogues) to inform FCPS and the BOS about citizens' views on budget priorities and the appropriate balance of services to property tax burden; and
- (7) WHEREAS citizens at the Dialogues clearly indicated that maintaining the service levels and quality of schools was a top priority and that revenue including property tax rates would need to rise to preserve schools and other services; and
- (8) WHEREAS with the Requested Transfer increase of \$81.9 Million, and in view of the uncertainty concerning state funding, FCPS will not be able to maintain service levels and provide students with the same quality of education as in the past, but will be able to provide a minimally adequate educational experience in the short term and recover eventually; and
- (9) WHEREAS the Proposed Reduced Transfer would inevitably result in a very substantial reduction in service levels, particularly when viewed in the context of the so-called "hold harmless" budgets of FY2008, 2009, and 2010 which actually required steep cuts below baseline and deep service reductions to accommodate the large increases in enrollment, loss of other funding, and continued rise in costs of mandated services; and
- (10) WHEREAS failure to fund the Requested Transfer would diminish the quality of FCPS for decades to come, constrict the educational opportunities available to current and future students, and erode the ability to attract and retain highly qualified teachers, by forcing additional actions such as:
- (1) Further class size increases (approaching or exceeding mandated maximums) which will likely cause not only very large classes at all levels but more "split grade" classes and the cancellation or reduction of specialized and high level middle and high school classes to avoid accreditation issues based on excess class size;
  - (2) Cancellation/reduction of non-SOL curricula including general electives, band, music, art, high level or specialized courses, career-training and after school activities such as theatre, sports and clubs;
  - (3) Re- imposition of those of the Superintendent's original cuts which were restored by the School Board after public comment, including (a) elimination of all freshman sports and indoor track, and reductions to Swim and Dive team pool time, (b) holding staffing for assistant principals, instructional assistants

and instructional coaches at current levels, (c) eliminating Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES);

- (4) Elimination/reduction of necessary maintenance and improvements of technology needed to prepare students to compete in the world; and
- (5) Elimination of full day kindergarten except in Title I schools, elimination of elementary band and strings, elimination of Language Immersion programs; and
- (6) Rollback to state minimums on school staff, psychologists, social workers and guidance counselors; and

(11) WHEREAS in addition to the cost of overall membership growth and loss of outside funding, the FY2011 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 overall numbers of students and 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) Virginia Retirement System (VRS) 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; and

(12) WHEREAS in addition to failing to provide funds to maintain school services at even the levels in the Requested Transfer, let alone the levels supported by citizens in the Dialogues, the County Advertised Budget also potentially shifts a number of County functions to the schools, including, for example, reducing clinic room aides, eliminating school resource and education officers and adolescent after school programs, and reducing Head Start classrooms and day care teachers; and

(13) WHEREAS the FY2011 School Budget and the taxpayers of Fairfax County continue to be adversely affected by: (1) continued under-funded mandates of the federal government (e.g., 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; and (2) the perennial 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 will likely receive state funding for less than 18% of its needs (compared with a 45% statewide average) leaving County taxpayers to provide about 78% of school funding (compared with a local funding average of about 49% statewide); and

(14) WHEREAS the FY2011 School Budget planned for a reduction in Commonwealth school support of about \$28Million but the actual loss may be much greater in that current Virginia budget proposals include more than \$700million in cuts to funding for K-12 education which would likely offset any possible benefit even if the Local Composite Index biennial recalculation is not frozen; and

(15) WHEREAS the BOS and Fairfax citizens in the Dialogues 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 including attracting new businesses and new residents and creating new jobs to contribute to eventual recovery from the current economic downturn; and

(16) WHEREAS public education (along with public safety) is the priority core mission of local government, the BOS has recognized that obligation in its historically strong support of the schools, and citizens have reiterated that primary core mission status in the strong support for schools voiced in the Dialogues; and

(17) WHEREAS satisfaction of a priority core responsibility is not demonstrated by a particular budgetary percentage but rather through meeting its legitimate budgetary needs before other non-core functions, however desirable, are funded, or, in the alternative, to raise revenue sufficient to support core and non-core needs;

(18) WHEREAS schools in the area represented by the MVCCA are among those most at risk, most heavily affected by the growth in population of students who require additional services and staffing consideration, most likely to suffer from school service reductions and imposition of fees, and whose progress toward fulfilling community expectations in addressing achievement gaps and meeting mandated benchmarks is most fragile;

(A) 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 2011 to:

- (1) Fully fund the Fairfax County School Board Advertised FY2011 Budget by providing a Transfer which is no less than that provided in FY2010, in accordance with the March 18, 2010 budget update presentation, and subject to subsequent additional modification, if any, by the FCPS Superintendent of Schools or the Fairfax County School Board in light of on-going budget development in the County and in the Commonwealth; and
- (2) Restore funding to County agencies of those items which may otherwise become a charge against the school budget but are equally consistent with County public obligations including school resource and education officers, adolescent after school programs, day care and Head Start programs, and public health clinic aides; and

(B) BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations urges that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, consistent with the expressed will of citizens in the budget dialogue process and with its stewardship obligations to meet core needs, protect important County assets, and preserve quality of life and hope for the future, establish a tax rate for FY2011 which is adequate to accomplish these stewardship responsibilities, and to actively seek out and employ all other revenue enhancement opportunities available by law.