

Sayers, Margery

From: Deborah Hefty <debbiern325@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 17, 2019 4:57 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Testimony regarding CR 121-2019, CB 42-2019, and CR 112-2019
Attachments: Testimony for Howard County Council 9-18-2019.docx

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Attached is my testimony for the Legislative Public Hearing Continuation - September 18, 2019 regarding CR 121-2019, CB 42-2019, and CR 112-2019

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September 17, 2019

To County Executive Calvin Ball and Howard County Council:

I am in **support** of **Council Resolution 121-2019** - A RESOLUTION pursuant to Section 4.201 of the Howard County Code declaring that 77.10 acres to be acquired by Howard County, Maryland from Chase Land, LLC authorizing the County Executive to convey the property to the Howard County Board of Education; waiving the advertising and bidding requirements of Section 4.201 of the Howard County Code. **Please expedite this transfer so the much needed High School #13 can be built!**

I am in **support** of **Council Bill 42-2019** - Introduced by Christiana Mercer Rigby and Deb Jung; Co-sponsored by Opel Jones and Liz Walsh - AN ACT to alter the school facilities surcharge in accordance with Chapter 744 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2019; and generally relating to the school facilities surcharge. **The current surcharge is so small it barely counts as funding for the schools.**

I have **concerns** about **Council Resolution 112-2019** – Introduced by Christiana Mercer Rigby, Opel Jones and Deb Jung - A RESOLUTION requesting the Howard County Public School System to draft, approve, and implement a lawful **multi-year Integration Plan** to ensure that Howard County Public Schools are integrated by socioeconomic factors.

First, I feel that any **imbalances were caused by the Howard County Council allowing development to be segregated by affordability in the first place**. This bill, on top of the already difficult task of the Howard County Board of Education (BOE) to balance the space in the schools available and the lack of sufficient funds for renovations and building more schools, is an undue burden on what I see as an already integrated system. **NO CHILD should endure 45-60 minute bus rides just to meet a “quota”** - which is what I am hearing/seeing from the articles, HCPSS attendance area adjustments proposed, and my attendance at the BOE meeting on 9/10/19. My last child in HCPSS is a 9th grader at Hammond High School and it is very diverse. We often gave rides to students whose parents worked late or did not have cars to pick them up after soccer practices with our older son. I can say, without help from a bus – a 7-9 mile *additional* commute would have been a deal-breaker for many after school activities even with a car and I don't know how many underprivileged students could participate. No matter how good River Hill HS is rated, I would not want my child bused that far. I knew what schools were nearby where I moved into the county and only expect the same services and educational opportunities to be available to my children as others – right where they attend. I expect my son to go to the same school as his local community – not one half-way across the county.

Second, I attended the regional meeting regarding redistricting after the attendance area committee developed 2 proposals for each educational level. The consensus was that we wanted to wait to make major moves until after HS#13 was built and would agree to bigger moves if done less often. One of the families at my table was economically middle class and racially a minority and they were complaining

about the frequency of the redistricting because they had 2 children in different high schools already. **We did not anticipate that our input would be discarded** and a new plan put forth by the school superintendent at the request of the County Executive without any input from those affected.

Third, I have **concerns about adding more buses** to achieve this perceived inequality since there was a shortage of buses already last year and there is a shortage of bus drivers nationally. It personally affected my son last year as he endured “double runs” and “double capacity” – with students having to stand in the aisles. A friend of mine is in walking distance of their high school and half of the neighborhood is slotted to be bused far away. **If moves are to be made, the cost and time of commutes need to be reasonable and walkers should never be bused.**

Lastly, I feel the perceived inequities are due to the county-wide nature of our school system. I grew up in NJ and our schools were mostly town-based with regional high schools. If there was really a “town” of North Laurel, the students here would not be bused to the “town” of Savage unless Savage was the closest regional high school. Students would gain new friends as they moved up, but seldom lost friends through redistricting. Taking a whole, large county with its rural areas and urban areas, dense housing and sparse housing, wealthy areas and less affluent areas and **tossing them like a salad just to meet a perfect ratio using buses is not the answer.**

In conclusion, **I am in favor of changes that are reasonable in order to move toward balance in the socioeconomic attendees of our schools.** I would like to see language added that has an eye to the future and is not an irrational “quick fix” that just upsets everyone. The bill calls for a “**multi-year integration plan**”, not an overnight solution to a problem. That said, **the solution will come much more quickly if the county approves the needed funds for renovations and new schools.** Don’t tell me there is no money – we are the 3rd wealthiest county in the nation!