

**Public Hearing on FY26 Capital Budget, Amendments  
To the FY25–30 Capital Improvements Program, and the FY26–31  
WSSC Water Capital Improvements Program (CIP) – February 6, 2025**

**MCCPTA Central Area Clusters Testimony**

WINSTON CHURCHILL CLUSTER • RICHARD MONTGOMERY CLUSTER \* POOLESVILLE CLUSTER  
ROCKVILLE CLUSTER \* THOMAS S. WOOTTON CLUSTER

Presented by Amy Ackerberg-Hastings (Central Area Vice-President and RM HS parent)

Good afternoon, President Stewart, members of the County Council, and staff. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the CIP allocation for MCPS. My name is Amy Ackerberg-Hastings. I serve MCCPTA as the Central Area Vice-President for the Churchill, Richard Montgomery (RM), Poolesville, Rockville, and Wootton clusters, and I am the parent of an RM junior. Our communities request **full funding of County Executive Elrich's recommendations with respect to MCPS's request for amendments to the FY25–30 CIP.**

In particular, we are delighted that County Executive Elrich agrees with Superintendent Taylor and the Board of Education about increasing allocations for Charles W. Woodward High School by \$28 million to complete the interior of the auditorium and associated spaces, and for Crown High School by \$20 million to complete the interior of the auditorium, shelled classrooms, and labs, as well as build the stadium as originally designed. **Auditoriums are essential school and community spaces**, so it is disturbing that Northwood High School has had to do without an auditorium while it is located at Woodward, and the problems that have occurred with the black box theatre there have just added insult upon injury. It is the least Montgomery County can do to ensure that the auditoriums are ready by the time the student bodies for Woodward and Crown are determined.

The Central Area is also grateful for Dr. Taylor's determination to address **MCPS's substantial maintenance and system replacement backlogs** through both the FY2026 Capital Budget and FY2026 Operating Budget requests. Thus, we support the request to increase the HVAC repair and replacement line item by \$4.5 million. The needs are widespread and longstanding; for example, Bayard Rustin Elementary School in the RM cluster has had HVAC issues since it opened in 2018. On the other hand, even though the decrease seems to be rooted in bookkeeping adjustments and in taking a "wait and see" approach to the Maryland Blueprint's mandates for the expansion of pre-Kindergarten, the proposed reallocation of \$4 million away from Building Modifications and Program Improvements (BMPI) is worrisome since all of the categories of capital funding provide basic necessities. Just one instance of the major facility issues in mid-county is the improperly-installed, failing roof at Cabin John Middle School in the Churchill cluster. We know that county revenues cannot cover everything, but we ask the County Council to use its powers of the purse and of oversight to help us keep attention focused on caring for all of the buildings MCPS already has and thus ensuring health and safety for all of our students, teachers, and staff.

Speaking of schools for which there are never enough revenues, I turn to the endlessly-delayed **major capital projects at Cold Spring Elementary School and Wootton High School** in the Wootton cluster **and Twinbrook Elementary School** in the RM cluster. The Central Area clusters understand why County Executive Elrich and MCPS propose the reallocation of Cold



Spring's and Twinbrook's placeholder construction funds pending completion of updated feasibility studies; as I indicated above, we support allocating those monies toward building out the auditoriums at Woodward and Crown. And, we appreciate the ADA site modifications and other issues that have been addressed at Wootton since its major capital project was removed from the FY2025–2030 CIP.

Even though these projects are obviously not going to be added to the FY2026 Capital Budget, what we are looking for from the County Council is for it to **monitor MCPS policy and stipulate accountability from leadership** in order to help us ensure that future renovations at these schools—and throughout the county—unfold along pragmatic and transparent pathways. Specifically, last fall MCPS expressed interest in reassessing the [Key Facility Indicators \(KFIs\)](#) that have been used since 2019 to prioritize the buildings and systems most in need of repair. A good number of these data points are out of date, as MCPS has been making lifecycle replacements as much as possible. However, it appears that a new assessment, to be renamed the Facility Conditions Index (FCI), has not yet begun. That raises the possibility that decisions about which major capital projects go to the front of the line in the FY2027–2032 CIP will be based on faulty information and that projects will be initially scheduled and then get cancelled once MCPS realizes that they have already made expensive investments in system replacements in these buildings.

As the last open-concept elementary school in Montgomery County, Cold Spring ES will surely still show many components and systems at the end of their lifespans if an updated report is completed, so I anticipate that major capital project will (deservedly) continue to move forward when funds are available and allocated. I am concerned, though, that recent improvements at Twinbrook ES and Wootton HS will “backfire” on those communities and leave them feeling blindsided if MCPS is not working from current information as well as being forthright about its criteria for determining when aging, dysfunctional buildings will be torn down, when they will be gutted for a complete interior renovation, and when they will be fixed up one system at a time.

Here's a partial list of the work MCPS has done at Twinbrook since the KFIs were collected:

- Since 2018: asbestos abatement; new floors; painting; replacements of classroom furniture; tuckpointing and hole-sealing work on the building exterior.
- 2020: replacement of the HVAC system.
- 2023: roof replacement.
- 2023: removal of chiller structures.
- 2023–2024: resolution of longstanding problems with bathroom plumbing and addressing of numerous safety concerns with paved areas throughout the building site.

Yet, because the KFIs have not been updated, I frequently hear the Board of Education and community advocates mention HVAC and the roof as the reasons why Twinbrook's 73-year-old building needs to be replaced. There are, of course, plenty of other intractable problems with the infrastructure:



- 150 ADA violations (e.g., a chair lift that has been inoperable for at least 15 years, doorways too narrow for accessibility, and uneven elevations both outside and inside the building);<sup>1</sup>
- a lack of fire suppression sprinklers;
- impeded sight lines for security down the building's oddly-connected four wings—[the wings were slapped on throughout the 1950s](#) as the then-new Twinbrook neighborhood experienced the Baby Boom;
- the overall aging of a 73-year-old building and its systems.

But, how is it going to go over with the general public if MCPS announces plans to junk a 5-year-old HVAC system and a 2-year-old roof? As the RM cluster found out during the Bayard Rustin ES boundary study in 2017, the Twinbrook community is already subjected to racially- and class-tinged denigration and abuse on social media.

I have been fighting for a new school for Twinbrook for years, but I also want Montgomery County and MCPS to be known as thoughtful stewards who exercise sound financial management. I hope that the County Council and MCPS would also want to avoid creating hard feelings and misunderstandings in communities, perhaps especially in a community like Twinbrook that is already underserved. Families need clear and accurate information about what work will be done at their neighborhood school, when, and why. So, in the coming months I ask that you please **partner with MCCPTA and other community organizations to demand due diligence and transparency from MCPS as it determines its future directions** for maintaining existing buildings and undertaking major capital projects.

I know that was a lengthy digression about an issue over which the County Council has little direct control, but it is a complicated matter that eventually will come before the Council in the form of major capital projects to approve, delay, or reject, so I thought it would be useful to provide background and context for Councilmembers to keep on file.

In closing, and returning to the matter immediately at hand, the Central Area clusters ask the Council to **approve the amendments to the FY2025–2030 CIP recommended by the County Executive and MCPS**. Thank you for your attention to and consideration of our concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Nelson, “ADA Title II Assessment: Twinbrook Elementary School,” EMG Engineering Project Number 123821.17R000-154.303, 29 October 2019, <https://ww2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/facilities/ada/reports/02206.pdf>.