

Honorable Members of the Montgomery County Council,

My name is Michael Gannon, and I am a current junior at Magruder High School. The proposal to further delay Magruder's Capital Improvement Project (CIP) in the 2025-2030 appropriation is both dangerous and harmful to the health and well-being of our school community. This project has already faced significant delays, with its original completion date set for 2027, now pushed back to 2029. As an active member of both my school, county, and state student government, I have seen firsthand how Magruder has been consistently overlooked in the budget approval process.

Built in 1970, Magruder High School suffers from a dysfunctional architectural layout and a lack of surrounding infrastructure. Expanded in 1994 and minimally renovated in 2000, the building is an incoherent patchwork, hastily assembled to accommodate a growing student population. There is no common space for congregation and community bonding, preventing students from forming meaningful connections. This constant need to move reinforces harmful mental health patterns. Furthermore, the once-distinctive colonel blue accents have faded into green due to aging, mold, poor HVAC maintenance, and general institutional neglect. One of our gym teachers resigned because black mold in her office posed a direct health risk.

A recent study by the National Institute of Health found direct links between school architecture and mental health, stating that the "[inclusion and] incorporation of elements in buildings such as natural lighting, open floor plans, private and open community spaces, artwork, and views of nature" supports overall well-being. Magruder possesses none of these features and is thus actively contributing to the mental health crisis affecting today's teens.

In the current CIP cycle, this Council, by proxy, has approved the construction of three entirely new schools—Northwood, Crown, and Woodward—at a cost exceeding \$600 million. The blatant neglect of Magruder, a historically underserved school, reveals a continued disregard for actual student needs and undermines claims of equity. For years, our school has been overlooked while funding is allocated to surrounding facilities. When attending Montgomery County Regional SGA general assemblies, I am appalled by the severe gap in building quality. Richard Montgomery High School features an interior street with lamplights and a historic brick structure inside its main hallway. Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School, perhaps the most egregious example, resembles a private institution with its gilded lettering and pristine facade—an outcome of privileged parental lobbying.

While I understand that the Montgomery County Council approves funding for MCPS but does not directly oversee its spending, it is imperative that the Council continues to prioritize equitable investments in school infrastructure. Ensuring that Magruder's funding remains intact

sends a clear message that all students, regardless of zip code, deserve safe and modern learning environments.

My request, and the request of my community, is that the County Council upholds its duty to students and stakeholders by ensuring an equitable distribution of resources. Magruder's CIP must remain on track for its expected completion. We, as students, cannot continue to learn in outdated, deteriorating facilities. We need and deserve progress. I urge you to support a school cluster that truly requires your attention.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Gannon