



**Montgomery Soccer, Inc**

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February 13, 2026

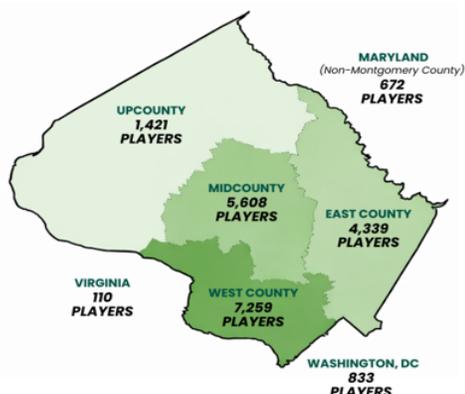
Via Email ([County.Council@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:County.Council@montgomerycountymd.gov)) and upload  
Montgomery County Council  
Council Office Building  
100 Maryland Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Comments on Montgomery County Public Schools' ("MCPS") FY27-32 Capital Improvements Program ("CIP") Budget Request

Dear Council President Fani-Gonzalez and Members of the Montgomery County Council:

Montgomery Soccer, Incorporated ("MSI") is submitting this written testimony to supplement the oral testimony we delivered at the Montgomery County Council's February 10, 2026, public hearing on MCPS' FY27-32 CIP budget request, and specifically their request for funding for the installation and replacement of turf fields at six schools throughout the County. MSI strongly supports artificial turf fields, and MCPS' request for funding of such.

Grass fields simply cannot meet the demand for sports in this County due to the near constant wear and tear. To ensure that all who want to play, can, we need turf fields. Turf fields can withstand the constant play and provide needed capacity. Thousands more kids can play sports in this County with turf fields, and receive the physical and mental benefits of play. You can see from MSI's Heat Map, below, that our players come from throughout the County, and that more fields are needed across the County so that they can continue to play. Only artificial turf fields can provide this needed capacity.



**ALL of MoCo!**

-20,000 unique registered players  
between 2023 and 2025  
(based on their home zip codes)

The County is simply out of room for field space, and is continually trying to do more with less. The long-term solution is to grow the pie, by making it easier to build fields in places like the Upcounty and Agricultural Reserve, where current zoning constraints make that either impossible or prohibitively expensive. Given those current constraints, however, replacing existing grass fields with artificial turf is the only viable solution that addresses inadequate field capacity in Montgomery County.

Artificial turf fields provide more year-round and all-weather capacity for all sports. They are not as weather-constrained as grass fields. Fields with better capacity benefit not only MCPS athletic teams and soccer clubs like MSI, but physical education classes and the broader community as well.

Grass fields are more subject to the extremes of climate change. They cannot be used when it rains heavily until the fields dry. On the opposite end of the spectrum, heading into last summer Central Maryland had already experienced 300 days of drought conditions according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. When a drought emergency is declared, no watering of grass is permitted. With climate change, this is becoming an increasing threat. The expense of installing good grass fields to then watch the grass die because of drought conditions is a real risk to the quality of fields in Montgomery County, and watering and die off of grass fields has significant budgetary implications as well.

The environmental and technical arguments against artificial turf fields are not new and preceded the installation of most of the existing artificial turf fields in MCPS inventory. Infill technology has vastly improved in recent years, negating many of these arguments. These new fields no longer use crumb rubber infill. In 2015, the Montgomery County Council banned the use of tire crumb on any newly constructed artificial turf fields funded by the County “to allay ongoing community concerns about the potential unknown environmental and health risks...,” according to a Council memo that year.

At Tuesday evening’s hearing, you also heard from MSI Board member Ken Fine. Ken is an orthopaedic surgeon specializing in sports medicine, and has been the head of sports medicine at George Washington University and Children’s Hospital. He is the team physician for George Washington University and several area high schools, and has taken care of professional and Olympic teams. He is also the physician representative on the Montgomery County Athletic Trainer Advisory Committee.

His testimony summarized his medical recommendations regarding artificial surfaces vs. natural grass for soccer fields. In an ideal world, natural grass is the best and safest surface for soccer. However, overused natural surfaces with ruts and irregularities are less safe than artificial surfaces. Interestingly, it has never been conclusively shown that there is an increased risk of injury on artificial surfaces. It has also never been shown that artificial surfaces cause an increased risk of any other medical conditions, such as asthma or cancer. In addition, the benefit of sports such as soccer for the health, both physically and emotionally, of children is immense. Therefore, applying simple logic, he supports continuing the use of artificial surfaces unless the County could significantly increase the number of grass fields so that they could be used appropriately, without overusing them, so they stay in good condition. The reality, unfortunately, is that the majority of grass fields in Montgomery County become dangerous as they are overused.

Lastly, there may be some misconceptions regarding MSI, and we would like to take this opportunity to clear them up. MSI is a nonprofit organization that focuses on *affordable and inclusive soccer for all*. MSI began over 55 years ago. Later, the County asked MSI to take over their recreational soccer program, which had significantly grown in size, to ensure that affordable soccer would continue to be available for all. At MSI, we still believe in *way to play*, not *pay to play*.

Over the past 8 years, MSI has paid for three turf fields for MCPS, all of which are still in use today, at Albert Einstein, Julius West, and Walt Whitman. Players come from all over the County to use these fields. MSI has a Partnership Agreement that you may

have heard about. There may be a misconception that MSI has exclusive rights to these three fields. Under the Partnership Agreement, MSI is allocated a limited number of hours. Through its funding of artificial turf fields at Albert Einstein, Julius West, and Walt Whitman, MSI has provided an incredible resource for the County. The impact of this should not be understated, given the budgetary challenges our County has, and continues to face.

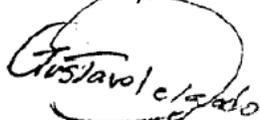
MSI not only supports MCPS' request for CIP funding for six turf fields this year, but MSI wants to continue its work in funding additional turf fields at other schools and fields throughout the County. This is a win-win for everyone, and specifically for the County budget. Artificial turf fields promote equity. They provide more year-round and all-weather capacity for all sports. Fields with better capacity benefit not only MCPS athletic teams and soccer clubs like MSI, but physical education classes and the broader community as well.

This budget cycle is challenging and MSI is here to help, so let us help: we are ready, willing, and able to assist in the funding of several replacement and additional turf fields. In fact, we have already offered to pay for the early replacement of the artificial turf field at Walt Whitman in FY2027 if the Partnership Agreement continues past its scheduled 2028 sunset date. We have also offered to pay for the replacement of the artificial turf field at Richard Montgomery, as well as contribute towards other fields, with a total approved outlay of \$3 million dollars.

In short, MSI strongly supports MCPS' CIP request for funding for the installation or replacement of turf fields at six schools throughout the County. And MSI wants to do more than that. We want to continue to partner with MCPS and the County by funding construction of additional turf fields throughout the County. This is a win for everyone – for the County budget, for MCPS, and for our kids and sports players throughout the County.

We thank you for your consideration of our comments. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions or require any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gus Delgado". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a hand-drawn oval.

Gus Delgado  
Executive Director