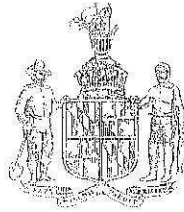


THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
JAMES SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
11 BLADEN STREET, ROOM 104  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SENATOR ROB GARAGIOLA  
410-841-3169



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
6 BLADEN STREET  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

DELEGATES  
KATHLEEN M. DUMAIS  
410-841-3052

BRIAN J. FELDMAN  
410-841-3186

CRAIG RICE  
410-841-3090

THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
15TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY

June 10, 2010

Patricia O'Neil  
President, Montgomery County Board of Education  
Carver Educational Services Center, Room 123  
850 Hungerford Drive  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Ms. O'Neil and Board Members,

We understand the recently convened "Monocacy Roundtable Discussion Group," charged with addressing perceived problems in projected enrollment at Montgomery County's rural schools (Poolesville Cluster), unanimously called for the creation of a formal Rural School District policy. We also unanimously support the establishment of a policy reaffirming Montgomery County's commitment to its nationally acclaimed Agricultural Reserve, and master plan for the preservation of farmland and open space. Through support of, and strict, adherence to a written policy that promotes healthy utilization of the County's rural schools, the Board of Education can now provide residents of the Ag Reserve assurances that officials have only spoken of in the past. In fairness, a policy that formally acknowledges the necessarily low population density surrounding these schools – as defined in the County's master plan thirty years ago – will finally put to paper a balanced commitment to the Ag Reserve and the special consideration MCPS must apply to its rural schools.

Increasingly, our constituents are voicing their clear desire for increased production of local food, and stewardship of the County's open spaces and parkland, 30,000 acres of which is within the Reserve itself. Moreover, the Reserve's long term success rests upon the vitality of its historic rural and farming communities. The rural schools serve not only as schools but also as the only available community centers- hosting sporting events, seminars, health clinics etc. Holding these few rural schools to policies designed with Montgomery's predominantly suburban and urban population densities in mind could result in their unnecessary closure, a situation that would, without a doubt, undermine the County's carefully crafted and widely praised preservation.

Your role as policy maker is of regional importance. The action we are urging you to take is reinforced within other County agencies that rightly conclude that the County's rural communities and services must be governed with an acknowledgement of the limitations placed upon future growth potential by the master plan. The combination of an appropriate, written policy framework, and low- or no-cost measures aimed at maintaining, and even bolstering, enrollment within the rural school cluster will ensure school performance and County preservation goals can both be met.

Thank you for your consideration of our request to strengthen policy that supports rural school districts.

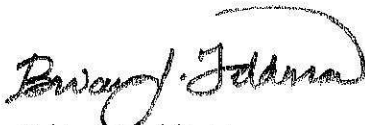
Sincerely,



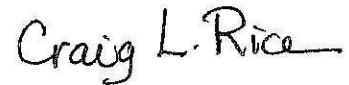
Rob Garagiola  
State Senator – District 15



Kathleen M. Dumais  
Delegate – District 15



Brian J. Feldman  
Delegate – District 15



Craig L. Rice  
Delegate – District 15