

May 28, 2010

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Caroline Taylor

Executive Director

caroline@mocoalliance.org

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kristina@mocoalliance.org

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,

First, I can't say enough about how positive and collegial a process the Monocacy Roundtable has been. I have served as a representative of the Agricultural Reserve, and hope that I have been able to bring to the table some measure of the history and purpose of Montgomery County's Agricultural and Open Space Reserve. The approaches that were developed by the group were rightly geared toward immediate, mid-term and long term needs of the County's rural school district. That is how I see the Board approaching this issue: establish concrete policy first, and use the policy to incorporate additional programs that ensure enrollment within the rural school cluster remains healthy and appropriate to the needs of students, and within the budgetary framework of the County. Make no mistake, this collective of representatives from several school clusters, schools, towns and the Reserve itself took this task very seriously, and was at all times mindful of the dire budgetary situation we currently face.

By way of background, The Montgomery Countryside Alliance was formed in 2001 by a small group of passionate and dedicated Montgomery County residents, seeking to protect our nationally recognized model of conservation, the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve. Originally formed to oppose a bridge crossing that would destroy the protected area, the group has since expanded to represent the Reserve's needs more extensively, including protection from unanticipated development threats and increasing support and awareness of its local Ag communities. MCA's board consists of community members from all over the county. Their enthusiasm and commitment to preserving and protecting our county's rural areas is unwavering. Please take a moment to tour our website, and learn more about the history of the Reserve and our current projects.

I have attached my position paper. The length reflects a desire to provide as much in the way of background and rationale as reasonably possible. This is such a wonderful opportunity to provide needed policy supporting rural schools and their long-term preservation, success and vitality in the highly valued Ag Reserve. Please let me know if there are any questions, and if the Board would like to visit the Ag Reserve to see, firsthand, why so many consider it "*Montgomery County's Best Idea!*"

Warm regards,



Caroline Taylor
Executive Director

Post Office Box 120
Boys, Maryland 20841
301.349.5021
www.mocoalliance.org