

November 29, 2011

From: Rich Edelman, Wootton Cluster PTA/PTSA Rep.

Reports from state legislators and parents in attendance at the Wootton Cluster legislative forum last night were very positive. We had three State Senators- Jennie Forehand (17<sup>th</sup>), Rob Garagiola (15<sup>th</sup>) and Nancy King (39<sup>th</sup>) and three State Delegates Luiz Simmons and Jim Gilchrist (17<sup>th</sup>) and Kathleen Dumais (15<sup>th</sup>). And we had around 70 parents, students, teachers and administrators in attendance. Thanks to all who promoted the event for helping ensure a good turnout for the forum.

The legislators addressed a number of issues including State support for school operating costs (apparently Montgomery County is receiving more State support than it once did and education is the only major area of the State budget that has been constant in recent years whereas other areas have seen cuts, whether more State money is available they could not say); the maintenance of effort law, the requirement for counties to maintain their per pupil funding for education (we oppose repeal or substantial change, all but one of the elected officials there favor keeping the law with only minor tweaks such as allowing averaging to avoid a penalty for not maintaining effort [spending levels] when a county has exceeded MOE in the past); efforts by some to shift the cost of paying for MCPS and other County employee pensions from the State to the County (all are against that and do not believe that such legislation is likely to move in the upcoming session); and State support for school construction (we pointed out the need to keep the modernizations for Cold Spring, Dufief and Wootton on track, they said that Montgomery County was the largest recipient of State school construction monies last year but the amounts are down from a high of about \$400 million per year to \$250 million per year). We also learned about the general role of the State in education funding and about what the State's responsibilities are relative to the County (which is primarily responsible for education funding). A number of speakers expressed concern about increased in class sizes and the ability of MCPS to continue to maintain the high standards for education it has been known for if recent funding trends continued. With respect to advocacy, we were urged to write to the Governor, continue to contact State legislators and to (respectfully) press the County Council and County Executive.

The forum last night was the beginning of our advocacy efforts. We do intend to organize letter-writing/petition campaigns and we hope that parents in the Cluster will respond to those efforts. Again, thanks to all who attended last night.