

Testimony on FCPS Draft Approved Budget presented  
at May 14, 2008 FCSB Hearing by Dr. Charles Dane,  
Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations (Federation)

This testimony is presented on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations (Federation).

We appreciate the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) Superintendent and his staff continuing work to streamline the educational programs, especially the summer school, although we regret the loss of so many instructional assistants.

We appreciate the work that the Fairfax County School Board (FCSB) has done in trying to ensure the continued excellence of our public schools, and we especially appreciate the effort the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (BOS) has made in providing a reasonable transfer amount to FCPS under such severe budgetary conditions. And, we hope that in some small way, by our previous testimony and input, the Federation contributed to this outcome.

Now, it is the FCSB's role to ensure that these funds are used to maintain the important programs for students of all academic abilities. We believe that the FCSB should retain those programs designed to enhance academic achievement of the economically and/or linguistically challenged, those with special needs, as well as the gifted.

Reconciling the FCPS budgetary needs with the transfer amount allotted by the BOS will require making difficult choices. The Federation Board presents reductions that we believe will maintain the most important programs while delaying the expansion of some programs that the Federation would support in better economic times.

Our recommendations are predicated upon the FCSB's request for a \$63.7M

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increase in the transfer amount from the County plus an estimated \$7M to provide for an additional and unexpected increase of 1,000 students and the \$40M transfer amount provided by the BOS. We estimate that this will require approximately a \$30M reduction from the advertised budget.

The Federation membership in their resolution on the County's proposed budget opposed any new programs or expansion of existing ones. Consequently, we are strong in our belief that no all-day kindergarten or FLES programs should be added to any additional schools in the coming fiscal year. Additionally, it may even be necessary to limit expenditures for the SASI program. Also, we suggest adopting the County's one-year reduction in funds contributed to the GASB45 account by half, as well as reducing the funds for leasing/purchasing buses by half. Then, as difficult as it may be, we recommend a further increase in the average class size by 0.5 students, as this appears one of the budgetary trade-offs. On the subject of salaries, we recognize the financial pressures on workers in Fairfax County, but conclude that a 2.5% COLA along with the additional 0.5% contribution to the pension account, and the step increases will adequately address these needs for most of the staff. However, we believe, as we stated last year, that some allowance should be made for those not receiving step increases and those receiving minimum step increases in the first couple of years. We also believe that the administrators are better financially positioned to absorb a full 1% reduction in the proposed COLA.

In looking ahead to FY 2010, we believe that (1) FCSB should undertake efforts to further identify areas of savings through joint activities/program with the County, (2) salaries of those with advanced degrees should be compensated at levels of those in surrounding jurisdictions, (3) FCSB should strongly consider realignment of administrative, academic programs and transportation on the basis of the present Consortia, and (4) further study should be given to re-engineering of the transportation system.

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If the FCSB makes the difficult reductions and makes visible efforts to identify other areas for savings, the Federation is prepared to work with FCPS to raise the public's awareness of the need for more adequate funding for next fiscal year.

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to this important process.