



Oakland Mills Community Association
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September 9, 2019

Howard County Board of Education
10910 Clarksville Pike
Ellicott City, MD 20142

Dear Chairwoman Ellis and Members of the Howard County Board of Education,

The Oakland Mills Community Association is outraged after reviewing the updated Capital Budget and Capital Improvement Plan released in preparation for tomorrow's meeting. We have been led to believe for many months that the rebuild of Talbott Springs Elementary School was the system's top capital priority. As recently as September 5, this was still true. In four days' time, with no notice to our community, this project is now recommended for deferral to 2026 and is not even in the top section of the priorities list. Even more insulting is the fact that the school system's architect is scheduled to brief our Association and community on plans for the new TSES at tomorrow's OMCA board meeting, which starts just 2 hours after you are considering this surprise change to the capital plan.

Oakland Mills and the Talbott Springs school community have waited long enough while this project has gone on again and off again for many years. Before the school system abandoned its facility condition indices, Talbott Springs was rated the worst facility in the system. On top of that, it is overcrowded and would become the most overcrowded school, by percentage points over capacity in the system under the Superintendents proposed redistricting plan, and this doesn't even count the pre-K students who aren't considered in the capacity calculations. There has been no investment in the critical systems supporting this facility for years, and it still has an outdated open classroom layout that is noisy and not conducive to learning. Furthermore, Talbott Springs, Oakland Mills Middle, and Oakland Mills High account for about 20 percent of the system's deferred maintenance. These are three buildings serving some of the highest rates of disadvantaged children in the county, and this proposal, coming just 5 days after a plan that kept TSES as the top capital priority, would further delay addressing the worst of these facilities.

It is additionally appalling that it's the school system itself putting this project at risk again. Recall last year the state funding was called into question because of odd attendance areas and a vaguely-defined immersion program for the new school. After addressing the issues raised by the state, are you seriously considering jeopardizing all of this again? Are the children subjected to the poor conditions and overcrowding at Talbott Springs now lower priority because their parents aren't as vocal as those at overcrowded high schools? Again, this would be an insult to our community as our high school has been under-enrolled for years while past boards of

education have avoided the tough decisions required to fill it. Don't make Oakland Mills pay twice for poor planning and avoidance of tough decisions. Your staff has admitted that there is not investment in our high school because it is under-enrolled. That one of our elementary schools would now be deferred in favor of investing elsewhere once again is absurd.

The Oakland Mills Community Association very strongly encourages you to stand by the Superintendent's September 5th capital budget and plan proposals. Anything less would be a great disservice to families, teachers, administrators, and community members who have poured so much time and effort into the TSES project. Most importantly, anything less would be a disservice to the current and future students of TSES. To have a facility with failing systems, noisy classrooms, and inadequate space is unacceptable today. To defer this another seven to eight years when you already have the land, the plans, and the commitment of the school and broader community to the effort to move forward now is unconscionable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon. Edelson", is written on a light-colored rectangular background.

Jonathan Edelson, Chairman
Oakland Mills Board of Directors

cc: Dr. Michael Martirano, HCPSS Superintendent
Howard County Executive Dr. Calvin Ball
State Senator Guy Guzzone
Howard County Delegates, District 13
Howard County Council