



Oakland Mills Community Association
The Other Barn • 5851 Robert Oliver Place
Columbia, MD 21045
410-730-4610 • oaklandmills.org



September 22, 2022

Oakland Mills Community Association Testimony on the HCPSS Capital Budget and Capital Improvement Program

“When originally deferred, this was a major HVAC renovation project; however it has been nine years since the project was deferred. Current conditions at the school now require a full renovation. It’s not practical and cost effective to maintain the system any longer. Due to the fact that the system is old, obsolete and continues to be problematic we are unable to provide a conducive-learning environment to both the students and staff.” This was the assessment of Oakland Mills High School’s heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system in 2017-2018. It had been deferred since 2009 and could wait no longer. Yet OMHS was removed from past capital improvement plans until this board acted last year.

Good evening and thank you for this opportunity to testify on the Superintendent’s proposed capital improvement program. My name is Jonathan Edelson, and I am speaking on behalf of the Oakland Mills Community Association.

To say we are concerned with the proposed CIP is an understatement. Last year, this board put Oakland Mills High School back into the CIP with an expected start date for renovations of 2026 after years of exclusion from the program. You heard from faculty, students, and concerned community members about the condition of the school. You are hearing from them again this year. Your own assessments should tell you all you need to know about the facility.

You have a plan before you that would defer a building, declared unable to provide a conducive learning environment four years ago, for another eleven years. To put that in perspective, if OMHS were taken care of on time in 2009, the original building would have been 36 years old. If it is taken care of under the plan you adopted last year, the building will be 53 years old when the project starts. If you wait until 2033, it will be 60 years old before the project starts. Some of the first students to attend OMHS will be in their early 80s while current students breathe air passing through the same system those original students had.

You are aware of other issues with the building, but for the record I will state a few:

- mold
- leaky ceilings
- lack of fresh air
- lack of natural light
- projected overcrowding
- no student gathering spaces

- non-functioning scoreboards
- substandard auditorium
- noncompliance with current standards including COMAR.

Is it a coincidence that the start date keeps getting moved on the high school with the highest proportions of lower income and traditionally underrepresented racial and ethnic populations? Enough is enough. I am here to ask you to stick to the plan you adopted last year. It is illogical, inequitable, and immoral to delay OMHS any longer.