ADOPTED

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
Rockville, Maryland

January 8, 2019

REVISED

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Ananya Tadikonda, Student Member of the Board of Education

Subject: Boundary Assessment Study Given Revised Policy FAA, Educational Facilities Planning

Background Information

During the past several decades, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has seen an increase in enrollment and population shifts that have presented challenges in maintaining equitable school facilities usage across the system. These current dynamics, coupled with the Board of Education's (Board) revisions to Policy FAA, *Educational Facilities Planning*, offer a unique opportunity to engage in an in-depth assessment of school boundaries and the process which they are determined, especially in light of the four factors outlined in the Board's recently-revised Policy FAA, *Educational Facilities Planning*: student demographics, geography, stability of assignments over time, and facility utilization. A thorough examination of how to maximize facilities usage in the current context would be fiscally responsible. Enrollment increases, population shifts, and the increasingly complex challenge of maximizing facilities usage requires that resource allocation decisions be predicated on concert information facilitating fiscally sound decision making.

A comprehensive boundary assessment also is in alignment with Board Policy ACA, *Nondiscrimination, Equity, and Cultural Proficiency*, and Policy ACD, *Quality Integrated Education*, which express the Board's commitment to, among other things, diversity in schools and providing equitable learning environments that promote student achievement. There has been significant research on the tangible academic benefits of having a diverse student body, all of which align with MCPS' goals for student achievement.

Although we cannot address housing patterns or solve socioeconomic inequity challenges within our county, we can examine how such factors might impact, or be mitigated by, how school boundaries are drawn and/or where academic programs are placed and provide the Board with an opportunity to be intentional in creating equitable learning environments that leverage the assets of Montgomery County. In particular, the current conditions create a unique opportunity to take an in depth look at promoting diverse student bodies and maximizing facility utilization.

It may not be feasible to revise all boundaries, however, there are many schools in MCPS with adjacent school boundaries that have both significant disparities in socioeconomic and racial

demographics and disparities in facility utilization. Examining the possibility of altering the boundaries for these schools can present opportunities for progress toward ensuring that all students are able to reap the significant benefits of attending school with a diverse student body, and having class sizes that allow time and space for enhanced educational experiences.

As we study this process and explore opportunities to improve students' learning environment, MCPS will actively engage with a broad range of stakeholders representing the full spectrum of community perspectives. As the Board is presented with options, there will be a robust two-way conversation with the community. This process presents an opportunity to have a substantive discussion about how the school system can both maximize facility usage and provide diverse learning environments.

With this background in mind, the following resolution is provided for your consideration:

WHEREAS, There is significant evidence that greater racial and socioeconomic diversity in schools provides academic and social/emotional benefits for all students; and

WHEREAS, Policy FAA, *Educational Facilities Planning,* now permits the superintendent and Board of Education to consider boundary options that involve not only schools within a high school cluster, but also other adjacent schools to alleviate the need for additions and portable classrooms; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Education revised Policy FAA, *Educational Facilities Planning,* to consider various factors when changing school boundaries, particularly developing options that maximize facility utilization and strive to create a diverse student body; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the superintendent of schools hire a consultant, through the Request for Proposal process and with the approval from the Board of Education, to review school boundaries in light of revised Policy FAA, *Educational Facilities Planning*, gather information and data regarding current school boundaries, benchmark with comparable school systems, and collect community input on the opportunities and challenges related to boundary setting using multiple methods and venues, including but not limited to Capital Improvements Program hearings in fall 2019*;* and be it further

Resolved, That the consultant present the findings and options to the Board of Education and the superintendent of schools with all deliberate speed, no later than spring 2020, and that the findings and options explore potential modifications to current school boundaries that comport to the four factors in Policy FAA, *Educational Facilities Planning*: student demographics, geography, stability of assignments over time, and facility utilization; and be it further

Resolved, That, after receiving the consultant's report, the Board of Education determine next steps, including how to obtain feedback from the community.

AT:smk:lcw