

August 26, 2019

Dear Board of Education Members,

I am writing as a concerned Howard County resident (Polygon 176) and parent about the proposed impact of Dr Martirano's Presentation of the Attendance Area Adjustment Plan, dated August 20, 2019. As noted in the Executive Summary on Page 4, this proposal was developed with three primary goals as excerpted below:

*The driving priorities for this process:*

- 1. Balance capacity utilization among schools throughout HCPSS, cost effectively.*
- 2. Advance equity by addressing the distribution of students participating in the Free and Reduced price meals program (FARMs) across schools to the extent feasible.*
- 3. Plan ahead for the High School #13 redistricting by minimizing double moves as much as possible.*

We have also studied and respect the published policies which the Board of Education utilizes in making decisions with regard to school attendance areas, specifically Policy 6010 (<https://www.hcpss.org/policies/6000/6010-school-attendance-areas/>):

Unfortunately, the Presentation of Attendance Area Adjustment Plan, dated August 20, 2019 is **not** consistent with the guidelines of Policy 6010 and does **not** achieve the three primary goals as stated in Dr Martirano's letter. Please consider the following facts.

**School Attendance Area:**

School Attendance area and geographic proximity is a consideration of Policy 6010. The proposed redistricting of Polygon 176 would more than double the distance students travel to get to school.

- Using Google Maps, Walnut Creek / Polygon 176 is 2.1 Miles from River Hill High School (RHHS). Walnut Creek / Polygon 176 is 5.8 miles from Wilde Lake High School (WLHS).
- Using WAZE, the commute time from Polygon 176 to Wilde Lake High School would be 3x as long as the commute to River Hill High School.
- In addition, many of the students from Polygon 176 would have to drive through River Hill High School bus and car traffic, in-route to Wilde Lake High School under the August 20, 2019 proposal. This additional driving distance will be costly for the school system and potentially dangerous for children.

### **Capacity Utilization:**

Policy 6010 identifies three key aspects to school capacity which are (1) Projections [item P], (2) Target Utilization [item S] which is defined as enrollment between 90% and 110% utilization of program capacity and (3) Utilization [item T].

The 2019 Feasibility Study (<https://www.hcpss.org/f/schoolplanning/2019/2019-feasibility-study.pdf>) notes the following findings:

1. River Hill High School is projected to be at 94% Projected Utilization for 2019/2020 school. This is at the lower end of the Target Utilization range.
2. Page 33 of the Feasibility Study indicates that River Hill is within Target Utilization through the 10-year projection period of the study.
3. Under Dr Martirano's proposal, River Hill would send 478 students to other schools and receive 741 students from other schools. This is extremely disruptive and unnecessary for a school that is currently operating within each of guidelines [P], [S] and [T] of Policy 6010.
4. The board should reject a plan which moves approximately 7,400 total students including 478 students from River Hill High School which is currently operating within Board Policy guidelines regarding Projections, Target Utilization and Utilization.
5. Any re-districting proposal should instead be focused on those five High Schools that are operating above Target Utilization levels (110%).
6. I believe the Board of Education should support a plan that includes less disruption at schools that are operating within the guidelines of [P], [S] and

[T]. For instance, since River Hill High School is operating well within the target utilization range, perhaps it should receive students from nearby schools such as Wilde Lake, Atholton or Howard, without sending 478 students out to other schools. **Certainly, the Board of Education can request a plan that achieves better capacity utilization with less than 7,396 total students being relocated.**

### **Equity:**

The very first sentence of the Policy Statement of HCPSS Policy 6010 is *The Board of Education of Howard County, with the advice of the Superintendent, establishes school attendance areas to provide quality, equitable educational opportunities to all students and to balance the capacity utilization of all schools.*

Furthermore, “equitable” is defined in the policy statement as: *Just or fair access, opportunities, and supports needed to help students, families, and staff reach their full potential by removing barriers to success that individuals face. It does not mean equal or everyone having the same things.*

The Presentation of the Attendance Area Adjustment Plan dated August 20, 2019 **is not** consistent with the Board of Education Policy Statement 6010, nor does it follow the BoE’s definition of achieving “equitable” educational opportunities. We hereby request the Board of Education identify ways to provide additional educational resources to the students in need. Transferring students from a school with a low FARM ratio to a school with a high FARM ratio, only results in better “averages” for the schools. **IT DOES NOT PROVIDE ANY INCREMENTAL EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES OR OPPORTUNITES DIRECTLY TO THE STUDENTS.**

In conclusion, I recommend the Board of Education reject the Presentation of Attendance Area Adjustment Plan dated August 20, 2019 due to the numerous and serious inconsistencies regarding both Policy 6010 and the stated goals of the proposal.

- The proposal would triple the commuting time of students in Polygon 176

- Many affected schools including River Hill High School are operating within the Board of Education projection, utilization and capacity guidelines and would experience a total student transfer of over 1,000 children inclusive of students being sent and received. Boundary adjustments should be focused on schools operating over capacity or projected to be over capacity based on the 2019 Feasibility study.
- The aspect of this proposal intended to create “equity” does not provide additional resources directly to students in need. **Children do not need consistent FARM ratios; they need additional education resources provided directly to their schools and classrooms.**

Thank you,

CC:

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