

Anne Arundel County Council



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April 5, 2009

James H. DeGraffenreidt, Jr.
President
Maryland State Board of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201



Dear James H. DeGraffenreidt, Jr.

The Anne Arundel County Council of PTAs opposes County Executive John Leopold's request for a waiver from the State's Maintenance of Effort requirement.

Anne Arundel County Schools have made tremendous progress in recent years. All of the relevant indicators of progress for county public school students show improvement. Attendance is up; test scores are on the rise. Dr. Kevin Maxwell has been a leader in bringing new programs and talent to our area in the past three years.

We recognize that these are difficult budgetary times, but Anne Arundel County is not one that historically has shown extravagance toward educational spending. According to Census data, the **average** jurisdiction in Maryland spends about \$9,815 per pupil -- while Anne Arundel County spends roughly \$7,500 per pupil. Cutting this amount further at this juncture will certainly stop the upward trend in education among County public School students, if not reverse it.

And because these are tough budgetary times for many families, our community public schools are seeing an influx of students enrolling from private and parochial schools. So while County Executive Leopold is attempting to squeeze educational funding, Anne Arundel County public schools are seeing a growth in enrollment.

Numerous studies have shown that three factors are responsible for improvements in academic performance: 1. small class size; 2. adequate funding; 3. parental involvement. Parents are doing their part, but it is up to our State Board of Education and our county leaders to make sure that items one and two are not jeopardized. Without proper funding, class sizes will most certainly grow, teachers will become overwhelmed, student performance will stagnate, and we will be where we were 5 years ago.

Anne Arundel County public school students have made and continue to make tremendous strides, especially in the area of narrowing the achievement gap between racial and socio-economic groups. This progress doesn't happen overnight. It has taken

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us years to achieve long-overdue improvements in instruction, material support, facilities and more. These improvements make all children feel like we adults are making their academic success a priority.

There are probably some government functions in our day to day, lives that we can temporarily live without. County Executive Leopold mentioned in his letter that, funding for first responders is also at risk if we are to achieve a balanced budget. We do not see this as a zero sum game between education and citizen safety. Potholes can go unfilled. This would be painful for our citizenry, but certainly not critical to the future of our county. And when good financial times return, the roads can always be repaired. But if we balance the budget on the backs of our children, it will not be possible to come back at a later time and give them the educational opportunities they missed and so richly deserved. These children are our hope for a better tomorrow. As parents and PTA members, we cannot let Anne Arundel County public school students down after they have delivered for us — recently helping to make Maryland the number one ranked state in education.

We urge you to reject the County Executive's request.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anita V. Owens". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anita V. Owens
President of AACCPAs, Inc. and
The entire board of directors

We represent 82 local PTAs in Anne Arundel County.