

**Testimony before the Montgomery County Board of Education Monocacy
Elementary School: Time for a Rural Schools Policy
November 11, 2010**

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Good evening. My name is Caroline Taylor and I am here on behalf of Montgomery Countryside Alliance (MCA). I would like to thank the Board for providing the opportunity to properly examine the proposal to close Monocacy Elementary School through the roundtable process. MCA served as the representative of the Agricultural Reserve, with the goal of bringing a measure of the history and purpose of Montgomery County's 93,000 acre Agricultural and Open Space Reserve. The approaches that were developed by the group were rightly geared toward immediate, mid-term and long term needs of the County's rural school district.. The universal consensus of the group was the need to establish a concrete rural schools policy first, and utilize that policy to incorporate additional means to ensure enrollment within the rural school cluster remains healthy and appropriate to the needs of students, and within the budgetary framework of the County.

Make no mistake, this collective of representatives from a number of school clusters, individual schools, towns and the Reserve itself took this task very seriously, and was, at all times, mindful of the dire budgetary situation we currently face. While we applaud the decision to keep Monocacy open, we respectfully submit that the rationale failed to address the fact that the rural school cluster is located in the designated low density Reserve, wholly outside of the water/sewer envelope.

Your schedules are daunting and time is limited, so I will simply ask the Board for the following based upon your support of the need to establishment guidelines that support schools in the Ag Reserve and indeed the Reserve itself. Please:

- 1) Provide guidance on moving forward with establishing a Rural Schools Policy. What is the process?
- 2) Review materials submitted in support of the policy.
- 3) Take a guided tour of the Reserve this coming spring. It will provide greater understanding of the need for a supportive policy. I am happy to take the group.

I have attached supporting documents to this statement, including correspondence from the State Delegation representing the County's rural district, expressing the need to move forward with policy that supports the long term goals for preservation of our farmland and open space.

Thank you for your time and dedication.