

Resolution in Support of Fairfax Schools in FY2012 Budget
Fairfax County Council of PTAs

Whereas, in February 22, the County Executive proposed a FY2012 budget (starting July 1, 2011), which includes a funding transfer to Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) at the same level as last year, *millions* below the School Board's request, and this proposal comes after last year's cut to schools funding by \$16 million;

Whereas, even this proposed funding level is not guaranteed – the Board of Supervisors could vote to decrease the transfer even further;

Whereas, increased student population and decreased funding means that Fairfax schools are doing more with less each year, but at what cost?

Whereas, with ever-stronger federal and state requirements and budget cuts, Fairfax teachers must still educate all our children, ensure sufficient percentages of students pass the Standards of Learning (SOLs), and provide appropriate learning for each individual child; and

Whereas, the proposed FY2012 budget for FCPS is smaller than its FY2009 budget, but the costs incurred by FCPS are higher:

- 10,000 additional FCPS students over that same time,
- 15,000 more students with extra needs (at-risk children, English-language learners, and students with disabilities), and
- Significant increases in fuel and health costs, among others;

Whereas, with a growing proportion of FCPS students considered low-income by federal poverty guidelines (now at 25% of student population), FCPS targets resources to further student achievement and continue closing the achievement gap:

- Needs-based staffing at all levels,
- English for Speakers of Other Language services,
- Priority Schools Initiative, and
- Additional resources for Student Achievement Goal projects;

Whereas, Fairfax County has already cut education funding - in total from FY 2009 to FY 2011, FCPS has made more than \$465 million in reductions and cost avoidances, including the elimination of over 1,400 positions, and over \$4 million in increased revenue from fees – including millions of dollars of cuts in overhead costs;

Whereas, these funding cuts have already resulted in cuts to educational services across the board:

- Students have experienced increases in average class sizes,
- Teachers' pay has been frozen for two years,
- Pimmit Hills Alternative High School was closed, and
- Summer school was cut, among other programs;

Whereas, until the budget is finalized, FCPS remains at risk for more cuts this coming fiscal year - as last year, early foreign language, elementary band and strings, full-day kindergarten, and other programs were all on the potential chopping block, and, if FCPS is cut any further, no program is safe from review;

Whereas, Fairfax is spending less on Per Pupil Spending -- Fairfax County is in the third consecutive year of declining per-pupil spending, with an overall decrease of \$810 since FY 2008, where at \$12,597 per pupil, FCPS is already pretty lean compared to Arlington and Alexandria that spend \$17,322 and \$16,983, respectively;

Whereas, Fairfax has Comparably Smaller Overhead Costs - According to the Washington Area Boards of Education (WABE) guide, FCPS has, the smallest percent of Nonschool-based Management to Total Authorized Positions;

Whereas, class size was increased by 0.5 students per teacher in FY 2009 and again in FY 2010, so now Fairfax has the highest "Approved Staffing Ratios" in the region, and these are only average amounts -- in certain schools, the class sizes are much higher than average;

Whereas, employee salaries were frozen in FY 2010 and FY 2011, and this is unsustainable if we are to recruit and retain experienced and knowledgeable teachers, especially in certain subject areas, and Fairfax is already in the middle of the regional pack, with teachers' salaries capped at amounts that are lower than the median income in the County;

Whereas, unfunded mandates are creating an additional fiscal burden - since 2001, Fairfax County has been implementing "No Child Left Behind," which added millions of dollars in costs every year - - for two recent examples, (1) the State mandate to perform online SOL testing will cost Fairfax County \$8.1 million, and (2) the Physical Education mandate for 150 minutes of physical activities will cost the county \$18 million;

Whereas, State cuts & Federal cuts impact the need for more County funds - Fairfax schools rely on the Board of Supervisors transfer for 73% of their costs, and state and federal funds make up the rest (with a small amount from program fees) - in the last few years, the State has cut education funds dramatically, and Federal Stimulus funds end in FY2011, and FCPS will lose millions more.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Fairfax County Council of PTAs Executive Board, recognizes the economic value of our great school system, as do the Economic Development Authority and Fairfax Chamber of Commerce, which both cite to the Fairfax schools as the main reason why Hilton, SAIC, Volkswagen, Northrop Grumman, and others have moved their headquarters here, bringing more jobs and maintaining economic stability in our County;

Be it further resolved that the FCCPTA Executive Board believes that our County must invest in education -- we are implementing visions in all areas of our County -- from the new Silverline and its respective planning in Tysons Corner and Reston, to the transportation infrastructure investments along the Route 28 and Route 1 Corridors, so now is not the time to make more cuts to education -- exactly the opposite -- now is the time to invest more in our schools, in our children, and in our future;

Be it further resolved that the FCCPTA Executive Board recognizes that, quite fortunately, Fairfax County is able to afford to fund our schools adequately -- our Fairfax County economy is seeing gains in residential and commercial values, as well as an incredibly low unemployment rate compared to our state and national colleagues; we have one of the most educated populations and the second highest median income in the nation, and as part of the Dulles corridor, we were the home of the technology boom and we still play a pivotal role as economic engine of our state,

Be it further resolved that the FCCPTA Executive Board supports market adjustment and STEP increases in FCPS staff salaries to the extent feasible in FY2012 and, if not, in the next budget year, FY2013.

Be it further resolved that the FCCPTA Executive Board urges Fairfax County to fund FCPS in FY2012 effectively --level funding from FY2011 at least, so that we can maintain our academic standards, recruit and maintain the most experienced and knowledgeable teachers, have the most effective class sizes, and continue to advance music and arts, foreign language, technology, critical thinking -- and the ability to teach to each individual child -- to ensure that our Fairfax students can be the entrepreneurs and civic leaders of tomorrow.

Adopted March 7, 2011
Fairfax County Council of PTAs Executive Board