

MCEMSA BoE Testimony – Wednesday, January 13, 2010

Good evening. My name is Daria Taylor and I am president of the Montgomery County Educational Media Specialist Association. Our organization has a long history of testifying in front of this esteemed board and I continue that tradition this evening. Over the past two budget cycles, school library media programs have lost 21 full time positions. And if the potential budget reductions are realized, school libraries will lose an additional 40 full time media assistant positions. Cuts this deep will have a profound impact on the students we serve in our library media centers.

Library media centers are much more than storehouses for great reading material. MCPS libraries are vibrant, dynamic learning centers where students develop critical information literacy skills. Media specialists are first and foremost teachers, working with students as young as pre-kindergarteners, teaching how to define research problems, locate and evaluate sources, find and organize information, present information in a variety of formats and use information ethically.

Library media staff work in collaboration with teachers to prepare our students to meet the Seven Keys to College Readiness and develop the critical thinking skills necessary to be successful in the 21st century. We work with students to find just the right book to read for pleasure or for a research project. We help students share their learning with others as they create projects using technology. But unlike classroom teachers, in addition to managing the resources of the Media Center itself, media specialists and assistants are often the technology experts for the entire school. Our media assistants are integral to preparing students to become 21st century learners

because a media specialist simply cannot teach a class research skills, solve technology problems to support classroom instruction, and help individual students simultaneously.

“A substantial body of research” for over 20 years “shows...that a school library program that is adequately staffed, resourced, and funded can lead to higher student achievement.”¹ However, data reported on the most recent State Library Media Report indicates that only 70% of Montgomery County Public Schools’ library media centers meet state guidelines for clerical and technical assistance. This percentage puts MCPS behind Howard, Charles, Calvert, Harford, and Garrett counties.²

Earlier this evening, you heard from Emily Scher, a Churchill High School student, who has vivid memories of her elementary library experiences. However, those library experiences, our effective library media programs, are possible only when each elementary library media center is staffed with a full time certified media specialist and a full time media assistant. Funding the 40 full time media assistant positions is an investment we must make for the sake of the students who frequent our library media centers each day, for the sake of our Emilys, as they to continue to grow as readers, researchers, and life-long learners. Thank you very much.

¹ “School Libraries Work!” *Scholastic Research and Results*. 3rd ed. Scholastic Library Publishing, 2010. Web. 12 Jan. 2010. <http://www2.scholastic.com//_resources///_2008.pdf>.

² Moore, Jayne E., and Jay Bansbach. “Facts About Maryland’s School Library Media Programs 2006-2007.” *Maryland State Department of Education*. Maryland State Department of Education, 2008. Web. 12 Jan. 2010. <<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org//FB12-FE6B-464A-A2AD-D0C6307773E3//.pdf>>.