



MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

850 Hungerford Drive ♦ Room 123 ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850

May 15, 2017



The Honorable Benjamin Cardin
U.S. Senate
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Christopher Van Hollen, Jr.
U.S. Senate
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cardin and Senator Van Hollen, Jr.:

On May 4, 2017, the United States House of Representatives (House) passed the *American Health Care Act* (AHCA) by a vote of 217-213. Because of the expeditious movement of the legislation, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and the Montgomery County Board of Education (Board) were unable to share concerns with the Maryland House members. As such, we are writing to outline what we believe to be unintended consequences of the AHCA. We understand that some of the United States Senate members plan to draft an entirely new piece of healthcare legislation and not vote on the AHCA. While we hope that the concerns outlined below are addressed in the new legislation, we would like to inform you of what is at stake if these concerns are not remedied.

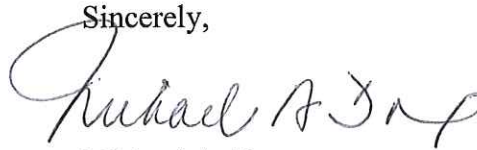
As passed by the House, the AHCA would reduce Medicaid by 25 percent, or \$880 billion, thereby, impacting healthcare for our most vulnerable children: students with disabilities and students in poverty. More specifically, the AHCA imposes a per-capita cap and shifts current and future costs of Medicaid to taxpayers in every state and congressional district. Currently, Medicaid provides critical health care and health care services to students who cannot access such services outside of school. Our school system relies on this funding to assist with costs for special education, including assistive technology and services (special education paraeducators); it also covers preventative care such as vision and hearing screenings for other Medicaid-eligible children.

Specifically in Montgomery County, MCPS serves 18,766 special education students and 6,995 Medicaid-eligible students. The cost of services for these students equates to more than \$5.0 million. In a time when Maryland is facing a projected deficit, we fear that shifting costs to the state would mean dramatic reductions to these services for students. This also would potentially strain our ability to provide services mandated under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA).

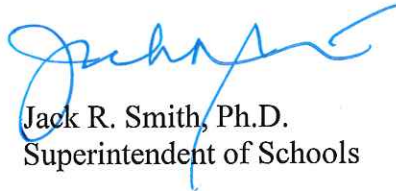
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It is MCPS and the Board's primary responsibility to provide a high-quality education. However, our students cannot reach their full potential and learn with unmet health needs. Again, we appreciate your steadfast dedication to our students and urge the continued investment in Medicaid. If you have any questions or wish to discuss the issue further, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Jack R. Smith, superintendent of schools, at 301-279-3381 or Ms. Patricia R. Swanson, legislative aide to the Board of Education, at 301-279-3617.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Durso
President, Board of Education



Jack R. Smith, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

MAD:JRS:prs

Copy to:

Governor Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.
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Members of the Montgomery County Council
Dr. Salmon
Members of the Montgomery County Board of Education
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Dr. Statham
Dr. Zuckerman
Mr. Civin
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Ms. Swanson