

Good evening Chair Rigby, Vice-Chair Jung, Members Jones, Walsh, and Yungmann. My name is Kelly Klinefelter. I am the president of Howard Progressive Project and a resident of Columbia in District 4. I am the proud mother of three children who are alumni of Swansfield Elementary, Harper's Choice Middle, and Wilde Lake High Schools. I am also a career teacher currently serving at Oakland Mills HS.

Tonight's hearing is specifically about the relationship between housing and our public facilities. We all value our schools. Everyone here tonight is here because they value our public schools.

What else do we agree on?

I think we can all agree that moving to Howard County for our excellent quality of life, including our great public schools, is a rational and reasonable thing to do. My family did it in 2002. I bet most of us in this room have done the same, and in doing so, can't reasonably deny the opportunity to someone else.

I think we can all agree that we need more school capacity. We have some open seats, but not enough to meet the need for the expansion of pre-K required by the Blueprint. We need to renovate and expand our existing schools and build new schools. The state has capital improvement money sitting and waiting for us to match it, but we don't have the local match. HCPSS's \$50 million annual capital budget is simply not enough to get that

state match. Year after year, we're leaving state money on the table because of a lack of local revenue, and our kids' educations are suffering because of it.

I think we all know that we have a long history of deferred maintenance in schools. Today, and for a while now, the capital deferred maintenance backlog is at about half a billion dollars. Our schools are not in good repair, and that has an effect on our kids' learning.

I think we can all agree that portables are not the long-term solution to school capacity issues.

I think we can all agree that developer fees are in the purview of the county council and that nothing is standing in the way of your raising them. There is collective support

in this community for you to raise more revenue from multiple sources to improve our public facilities, including and especially our schools. Do it.

And here's one more fact – we have families in our schools who are homeless and who are rent-burdened and cannot afford to pay PTA dues, who work multiple jobs and cannot attend PTA and PTACH meetings and county council meetings. It's that simple fact – the fact that over 13,000 of our households pay unaffordable rents and 6800 of those pay 50% or more of their gross income on rent – that drives me and all the other housing advocates in this room tonight to be here, speaking up for their rights to housing.

Here's my argument:

If we choose not to expand our housing supply in the General Plan Update, we need to be clear – it is not a choice to preserve the status quo or to protect our schools. It is a choice to put the county on the path to a deteriorating quality of life. People in our country get to move to and live where they choose. Right now parents are choosing to move into existing Howard County housing in pursuit of a quality education for their children. Without more housing this process leads to overburdened schools.

Seen in this light, housing growth isn't a problem for schools; it's the solution for schools.

If our property base in Howard County remains static, so does our school system – we need to build smart and broaden our tax base so that we can build the world-class brick and mortar schools that our Howard County students deserve. In today's Baltimore Sun, Councilwoman Walsh said it – we need to preserve our green space while building in our already developed areas near transportation.

Let's grow our economy and extend housing opportunities to our young people, our seniors, our frontline workers and pandemic heroes, our neighbors with disabilities, our neighbors struggling with homelessness, our neighbors choosing between food and rent. Let's grow our neighborhoods and our transportation infrastructure. Let's grow our small businesses by extending to their

employees the opportunity to work AND live and pay taxes
in this beautiful community.

As always, thank you for the work you do for Howard
County.