



FAIRFAX COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Jack D. Dale, Superintendent
8115 Gatehouse Road
Falls Church, Virginia 22042-1203

August 28, 2006

Committee on Government Reform
Attention: Ms. Teresa Austin, Chief Clerk
U.S. House of Representatives
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Fairfax County School Board, I want to thank you for this opportunity to speak on the subject of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's (BRAC) recommendations that will move thousands of jobs to Fairfax County.

First, we applaud the federal government for its initiative to find means to improve operational efficiencies and effectiveness. We know that a great deal of work and thought went into the BRAC report and findings. We hope that our comments are not interpreted as criticizing this report as that is not our intention.

We do have a level of anxiety about the implications of the movement of so many jobs to Fairfax County and its potential impact on the school system. There are two specific concerns. First is whether these jobs result in a dramatic and rapid increase in residential housing in this part of the county. Our current projections are that we will have little to no elementary school capacity to absorb additional students and limited capacity for middle and high school students. Our capital improvement program already lacks sufficient funds to meet known needs so we have no flexibility to appropriately address any additional demands caused by the BRAC recommendations.

Second, even if we don't see an increase in student enrollment, we are concerned that commuter traffic increases will cause further congestion on roads and make it more difficult for the school system to get students to their schools safely and on time. As you know, we also are limited in our ability to provide adequate school bus transportation. Increased congestion will mean longer bus rides for students and late arrivals to schools. We have heard that there is the possibility that budget cuts at Ft. Belvoir may require that the base consider closing certain gates to school buses. If true, this will exacerbate an already challenging situation and compound the impact of increased traffic congestion. With teaching time an important part of our ability to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind, we can ill afford to have students arriving late to school.

In order to assess the potential impacts that might result from this major federal action, our understanding is that an environmental impact statement (EIS) may be required or is currently underway. We understand that, under the National Environmental Policy Act, "cooperating agency" status can be assigned to FCPS as a means of facilitating an evaluation of potential impacts and mitigations of this major federal action.

Whether as a part of the EIS team evaluating impacts or as a potentially impacted independent government agency, it is necessary for FCPS to have insight into the size, mobility, and household income of personnel to be relocated during the next five to ten years. We would also like to find out the status of a new master plan for the base to address the changes required by BRAC. We would welcome the opportunity to be involved in the process.

At the heart of our interest is our desire to continue to provide the best education possible to the military families we will be hosting and for the larger community in which they live. This can be accomplished most efficiently by allowing the school system to be involved in the process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jack Dale".

Jack D. Dale
Superintendent of Schools

JDD/lms