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BOARD OF EDUCATION

BALTIMORE COUNTY

PUBLIC MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

BROADCAST VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

AUGUST 23, 2023

Transcribed by:
CRC Salomon, Inc.

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1 BOARD MEMBERS:
 2 Jane Lichter, Board Chair (Absent)
 3 Robin Harvey, Vice Chair
 4 Tiara Booker-Dwyer
 5 Maggie Domanowski
 6 Tiffany Lashawn Frempong
 7 Julie C. Henn (Absent)
 8 Rodney R. McMillion (Absent)
 9 Christina Pumphrey
 10 Dr. Brenda Savoy
 11 Felicia Stolusky
 12 Emory Young
 13 Kayla Drummond, Student Member (Absent)
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1 P R O C E E D I N G S
 2 MS. HARVEY: Good evening, everyone. This is
 3 Board Chair Robin Harvey presiding on behalf of Chair
 4 Jane Lichter, and I call to order the Baltimore County
 5 Board of Education's public hearing on the proposed
 6 Campfield Early Learning Center program closure
 7 recommendation.
 8 The public sign-up sheet for speakers was made
 9 available prior to this hearing. Each speaker will be
 10 allotted three minutes to express his or her views on the
 11 proposed closure. As your name is called, kindly come to
 12 the front microphone to speak.
 13 At my right, you will see the Board's
 14 timekeeper. The timer lights will turn red to let you
 15 know when you have one minute remaining, and then sound
 16 when your time is up.
 17 If you wish to have your written comments or
 18 other relevant information to be considered by Board
 19 members, kindly give that information to the Board's
 20 assistant, Ms. Grover (sic), and she will see that it is
 21 distributed.

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1 I would like to call our first speaker, Jessica
 2 Miller. And if Mike Squirrel would come up to be on
 3 deck, that would be good.
 4 Good evening.
 5 MS. MILLER: Hi. My name is Jessica Miller.
 6 I'm mother of Jackson Miller (phonetic), who attended
 7 Campfield Early Learning Center up until he had to
 8 transition to Millbrook for first grade. I also have
 9 another son, Caden (phonetic), who will be starting at
 10 Campfield this fall. Both of my children are autistic.
 11 I am also autistic, and we have been a part of the Campy
 12 (phonetic) family from, basically, the moment my child
 13 first walked through those doors.
 14 The very first week that my child went to
 15 Campfield, he got off the bus and couldn't get into the
 16 classroom. He barely could get off of the bus, and this
 17 really tall man with a really long beard carried him to
 18 his classroom every day for the first week of school.
 19 Jackson fell in love with that school and the
 20 teachers at that school, and I fell in love with that
 21 school and the teachers of that school. I have been to

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1 every IEP meeting that I could in person, before COVID
 2 happened, and I have never felt more welcome, more heard
 3 and seen. I have been able to address issues that a
 4 parent of somebody with an autistic child, you know, is
 5 not comfortable addressing with people who don't
 6 understand, and this is a group of people who truly
 7 understand.

8 Campfield has a 33 percent rate for special
 9 needs students. I mean, that's tremendous. That's 100
 10 to 160 special needs kids. Those numbers of students
 11 need a place to go that is specially geared towards them.
 12 Redistributing them into classrooms that are already
 13 overcrowded is a disservice.

14 My child transitioned to Millbrook Elementary,
 15 where he is currently in a classroom where the ratio is
 16 25 to 1. He has one aide. There's no way that that aide
 17 can truly be a one to one when they need to act, also, as
 18 a teacher's assistant. It's just not feasible. Putting
 19 students that require that kind of one-to-one care in
 20 these overcrowded situations is a safety risk.

21 Campfield is the kind of school where if my

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1 child runs, those teachers run after him. And they can,
 2 because it is a 10-to-14 student to 1 teacher and 2 TA
 3 ratio.

4 I think it would be a tremendous disservice to
 5 your special needs community to disband something that is
 6 so genuinely geared towards them, when they are such a
 7 vulnerable population. And special needs teachers,
 8 special education teachers, they are one of the hardest
 9 working and hard-to-retain groups of teachers. So I
 10 think by putting them in a situation where they can't do
 11 proper service to their students is going to, probably,
 12 negatively increase your teacher retention rates, as
 13 well. I think that they deserve to be honored and heard,
 14 and I think that a school like Campfield is where that
 15 happens best.

16 MS. HARVEY: Thank you.
 17 MS. MILLER: Thank you.
 18 (Applause.)
 19 MS. HARVEY: Our next speaker is Mike Squirrel,
 20 and after him, Elaine De Castro.
 21 Mr. Squirrel?

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1 Elaine De Castro? And after Ms. De Castro,
 2 Helene Groves.

3 MS. DE CASTRO: Hi.
 4 MS. HARVEY: Good evening.
 5 MS. DE CASTRO: My name is Elaine De Castro. I
 6 am the parent of this handsome young man right here. For
 7 the past year, Campfield has been more than a school.
 8 It's been a second home. Ever since Sebastian right here
 9 got diagnosed with autism, one of my main priority was to
 10 find a high-quality school who dedicate themselves to the
 11 one-on-one care. They care for children like him. He's
 12 also nonverbal, which add to the stress of sending a
 13 child to school.

14 I find that place in Campfield where from the
 15 people at the door, bus driver, the front desk, the
 16 janitor, everyone is welcome. Not to mention the
 17 superstar teacher, Mr. Danny, who have -- I have his
 18 personal phone number and when I have any anxiety, 7:30,
 19 he probably brushing his teeth, he still managed to
 20 answer my text. So I don't think I'll find that
 21 anywhere, but let's keep dreaming.

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1 But on a more serious note, when he got
 2 diagnosed, one of my first priority was to find a high-
 3 quality school who specify or dedicate themselves to
 4 children on the spectrum. We don't have a lot of money,
 5 so a private school was not an option. So low-income
 6 families don't have the luxury of saying, like, well, no,
 7 my child's going to go here or there.

8 If Campfield get dismantled or closed, you
 9 wouldn't be closing a regular school. You would be
 10 closing and separating a family. Because that's what
 11 they are. Mr. Mendez -- I know everybody by name, Mr.
 12 Mendez, Ms. Brenda, Groves. You just get to know
 13 everyone because everyone's so welcoming and so ready to
 14 help you, to assist you, to make you feel not pity like
 15 most parents with children with autism. We don't want
 16 pity. We want understanding. We want to be seen. We
 17 want somebody who say I get it. And that's all we want.
 18 We want our child to go to a place where we feel
 19 comfortable, where we feel less anxious that your kid can
 20 communicate. But he or she will not (indiscernible)
 21 themselves because somebody there will be there to assist

Page 10

1 them.

2 And I think I'll have 38 seconds left. To

3 close, closing Campfield won't be just closing a regular

4 school. It will be closing a small community that really

5 care about each other. Okay, that's it.

6 MS. HARVEY: Thank you very much.

7 (Applause.)

8 Helene Groves? And then next is Sharon Saroff.

9 MS. GROVES: Good evening to all of the Board

10 members. It's nice to see you again. Thank you so much

11 for taking your time this evening to come out and hear

12 us. While the numbers here may be small, you can feel

13 that the passion is there.

14 Campfield has a home in the hearts of our

15 school family, and that school family extends well beyond

16 the boundaries of our school doors. As an SEL teacher, I

17 value the relationships built between educators,

18 families, and students. And as an educational facility

19 focused solely on the unique developmental needs of very

20 young learners and their families, Campfield is an

21 opportune environment for those families to transition

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1 from childcare and community-based intervention services

2 into the educational setting.

3 Educators and our educational support personnel

4 collaborate with families to build confidence, recognize

5 competence, and instill a love for learning, as well as a

6 trust in the school system and the knowledge that we will

7 be there to meet their needs, whatever they may be, big

8 or small.

9 While administrators in any building strive to

10 recognize and remain cognizant of the needs of all of

11 their students and teachers, Campfield has the luxury of

12 being a program focused heavily on preschool and pre-K-

13 aged children, three and four year olds. This allows our

14 administrators to very intentionally prioritize inclusive

15 programming and look at the needs of their teachers, as

16 well, to provide professional development that is

17 relevant and needed for that very specific set of staff.

18 And these are all anchored by that BCPS mission

19 statement.

20 Additionally, the Maryland Blueprint for

21 Progress requires MSDE to expand access to early

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1 childhood programs across the state. BCPS is doing this

2 by shifting from a half-day program to a full-day program

3 for all of our three-and-four-year-old students over the

4 next few years. To do this, we will require twice as

5 many classrooms and twice as many special educators. On

6 the TABCO side, we'll work on getting those teachers to

7 stay, I promise.

8 Instead of closing Campfield, a facility that's

9 already designed for young children, complete with tiny

10 tables, tiny chairs, teeny-tiny toilets, why not

11 repurpose it to increase access for preschool and pre-K

12 students and meet those needs? Thank you so much.

13 MS. HARVEY: Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 After Ms. Saroff is Daniel Chaney.

16 MS. SAROFF: Good evening.

17 MS. HARVEY: Good evening.

18 MS. SAROFF: I have never had the luxury of

19 having a child attend Campfield, but I've had the luxury

20 of working with a good portion of the teachers and Mr.

21 Mendez for quite a number of years. I've watched

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1 administrators turn over and retire, because I've had a

2 lot of clients in that building.

3 That building is geared towards our most

4 vulnerable population of students, our special needs

5 preschoolers. We cannot afford to close that building

6 and try to put these kids into overcrowded elementary

7 schools. I know we said that we're only going to be

8 putting them into four elementary schools. But I can

9 tell you that there are elementary schools that are

10 overcrowded currently that you're not even focusing on to

11 fix that, and then you want to put these very vulnerable

12 kids into those buildings.

13 We have a blueprint in the state that says we

14 have to increase access for preschool programs. We have

15 a population of students that I serve. You know that I

16 serve them, that really need to have this building stay

17 open. If you close it and repurpose it, where are you

18 going to put these students? Because this student --

19 these students are not going to go away. They need to

20 have proper access, proper services. If they have their

21 services, guess what? I go away. I know that you would

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1 love me to go away. No, somebody's shaking their head.
 2 I would be able to go back into the classroom,
 3 which is my first love. Okay? Let's make a -- let's
 4 take this opportunity to increase access, as opposed to
 5 decrease it.
 6 I don't know where you're going to put all the
 7 students that are going to Campfield right now, but
 8 they're certainly not going to fit full time into the
 9 four schools that you're saying. We really need to not
 10 close this building. And we really need to keep this
 11 wonderful staff over here. Because they are gems, every
 12 single one of them, because I worked with them. That's
 13 what I have to say.
 14 MS. HARVEY: Thank you.
 15 (Applause.)
 16 Mr. Chaney.
 17 MR. CHANEY: I've never done this before. I'm
 18 the superstar Mr. Danny, as Sebastian's mom said. I'm
 19 going to read right from the paper so I don't forget
 20 anything.
 21 First, I wanted to thank you for this

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1 opportunity to voice our concerns. As I said, my name is
 2 Danny Chaney. I've been a self-contained preschool pre-K
 3 teacher at Campfield Early Learning Center now, this
 4 would be my fourth year. Before this job, I would
 5 support self-contained classrooms, including classrooms
 6 at Campfield, in a resource role, with the Office of
 7 Special Ed.
 8 Altogether, I have supported our youngest
 9 special education students with significant needs in BPCS
 10 for the past 10 years. I knew from the moment I first
 11 supported Campfield that I would want to work in an in-
 12 house role there, due to their culture of inclusivity and
 13 the feeling of community.
 14 One of the main reasons is the continuum of
 15 services that can and is provided at Campfield. This
 16 continuum of services at Campfield has shown to be of
 17 great benefit to the vulnerable population of nonverbal,
 18 limited-language students that I have the privilege to
 19 teach.
 20 Campfield's ability to provide a continuum of
 21 programming for students throughout their journey at

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1 Campfield has proven to ensure that students can be fully
 2 included with their typical peers in a general education
 3 setting. Campfield provides developmentally appropriate
 4 programming from the outside general education classroom
 5 to a more modified inclusion program with their peers, to
 6 then full general education access.
 7 Having all these programs and supports in the
 8 classroom allows the Campfield community to provide the
 9 students with all those things that we need for the
 10 students' inclusion to be successful, such as gradual
 11 trial periods, scaffolded supports, continuous
 12 collaboration between teachers. We really use a
 13 strengths-based approach to ensure success, and we have
 14 wonderful administration that can focus on the inclusion
 15 of our youngest learners that I know doesn't always
 16 happen in the comprehensive schools.
 17 Inclusion is continuously the early childhood
 18 goal at -- I'm sorry. I knew this was going to happen.
 19 Campfield Early Learning Center and I know it is the goal
 20 of BCPS. In total of my 16 self-contained students with
 21 very significant needs last year, I was able to fully

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1 include 6 of them, and now they are transitioning to
 2 general education kindergarten. Where I can promise you
 3 that they will meet success due to the Campfield
 4 approach.
 5 Once again, thank you for your time and
 6 considering this when you reconsider how Campfield is
 7 purposed.
 8 MS. HARVEY: Thank you so much.
 9 (Applause.)
 10 Mike Squirrel?
 11 Okay. Our last speaker is Councilman Izzy
 12 Patoka.
 13 MR. PATOKA: Okay. Well, welcome to the
 14 beautiful 2nd District to the Baltimore Board of
 15 Education of Baltimore County. I really appreciate you
 16 coming to Pikesville High, which is in the beautiful 2nd
 17 District, and so is Campfield.
 18 And it's a little bit personal for me because a
 19 long time ago, I went to Campfield School. It was a
 20 different makeup at the time. It was a one to six. It
 21 wasn't an early learning center. But it's personal for

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1 me in a number of ways, and I really have four requests
 2 of the School Board.

3 Request No. 1 is that you be deliberate in your
 4 approach in your consideration, especially with what
 5 you've heard this evening from what appears to be some
 6 very dedicated teachers that give everything they have
 7 towards the children that are in the facility that we're
 8 stewards of. So I'd ask you to be deliberate in your
 9 approach, number one.

10 Number two, if the decision does come to
 11 repurpose Campfield, I would say that you start that at
 12 the same time that you're making a decision on the
 13 disposition of Campfield. Because in discussions I've
 14 had with some members of the school system, we are
 15 talking about years, you know, 2027 as things would be
 16 phased out, that we would then consider the disposition
 17 of the building. That's way too late. It needs to be
 18 done now, and these decisions need to be done in tandem
 19 and in sync.

20 I would also ask you to -- I guess this is
 21 number three, which is to not do this in isolation. We

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1 all -- and I'm not trying to pick on BCPS or the Board of
 2 Ed, but in government, generally, we -- and I've done
 3 this for a long time. Most of my career has been in
 4 government. We have some level of satisfaction working
 5 in silos, and that's really not best for the people that
 6 we serve.

7 For example, there are components of Campfield
 8 that might serve teachers in the future, that might serve
 9 as potential for recreation for the community, that might
 10 even be a community gathering space, or might be for
 11 support personnel. All educators might have some need at
 12 Campfield.

13 And then the last thing, number four, the last
 14 thing I'd want to bring to your attention, is as a
 15 council member for the district, I'm happy to work with
 16 the School Board. Feel free to reach out to me to use
 17 me. I have really good contacts within the community. I
 18 see Senator Sydnor back here, too, and he has great
 19 resources within the community. And I don't want to
 20 speak for you, Senator, but I know that he would likely
 21 be willing to work with the Board, with our state

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1 partners, with our local partners, in figuring this out
 2 in a way that fits for our entire community, and also
 3 fits for the outstanding teachers we heard this evening.

4 So thank you, again, for coming to the
 5 district. I appreciate you not asking folks to come out
 6 to Greenwood, so it's great for you to be here. And
 7 appreciate your consideration on this matter. Thank you
 8 very much for the service that you provide.

9 MS. HARVEY: Thank you, Councilman Patoka.
 10 (Applause.)

11 That concludes our public speakers for this
 12 evening. Before we adjourn the meeting, I really just
 13 want to say that the passion and commitment that has been
 14 demonstrated here by the parents is palpable. The
 15 dedication by the staff is clear. We appreciate hearing
 16 what you've had to say, and we extend our sincere
 17 gratitude to you for engaging in this process with us.

18 We will take what you've said into
 19 consideration as we make this very important decision.
 20 And the Board is scheduled to vote on the proposed
 21 Campfield Early Learning Center program closure

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1 recommendation on Tuesday, September 12, 2023.

2 If anyone has additional comments that you'd
 3 like the Board to consider, you may send them to
 4 boe@bcps.org. Or you may contact the Board office so
 5 that the information can be forwarded to all Board
 6 members.

7 This concludes our hearing, and this meeting is
 8 now adjourned. Thank you so much.

9 (Meeting adjourned.)

CERTIFICATE

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I, Vivian Saxe, hereby certify that I transcribed from audio file the proceedings to the best of my ability in the foregoing-entitled matter; and I further certify that the foregoing is a full, true, and correct transcript of the audio files produces.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, I have subscribed my name on August 28, 2023.

Vivian Saxe
Transcriber

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