



Oakland Mills Community Association
The Other Barn • 5851 Robert Oliver Place
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January 27, 2021

Howard County Board of Education
Dr. Martirano, Superintendent, Howard County Public School System
10910 Clarksville Pike
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Dear Members of the Howard County Board of Education and Superintendent Dr. Martirano:

The Oakland Mills Community Association is aware of the building reopening expectations set by Governor Hogan and State Superintendent Salmon last week and the resulting reconsideration of plans for the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). As you know, the Oakland Mills community has had some concerns over the years about the age and condition of some of our facilities. As specific examples, our understanding is that Talbott Springs Elementary, Oakland Mills Middle, and Oakland Mills High still have their original ventilation systems, dating back to the early 1970s. Additionally, Talbott Springs has open classrooms with walls that do not reach ceilings, and Oakland Mills Middle has small interior classrooms that were created over the years by enclosing formerly open space in lieu of completing a complete building renovation.

It is our hope and expectation that the condition of each individual school building in Howard County will be carefully considered and addressed to the extent feasible to minimize the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission between students, teachers, and staff. The information we have seen from the school system so far indicates that each building has been retrofitted with new filters. This information does not address specific buildings, and information about adjusting systems for more outside air exchange and other preventive measures is vague.

The Oakland Mills Community Association requests that you conduct and release risk mitigation actions on each HCPSS facility before making decisions about reopening buildings and before asking any students or teachers to commit to returning to buildings. Moreover, we request that HCPSS release virtual tour images of each building so families can see what the in-person setup will be in their school buildings before having to make decisions about returning. Specifically, we request to be on any distribution of information pertaining to the safety of buildings in Oakland Mills Village: Oakland Mills High, Oakland Mills Middle, Stevens Forest Elementary, Talbott Springs Elementary, and Thunder Hill Elementary.

Students and teachers must feel safe returning to any HCPSS building, and in Oakland Mills we are concerned that those who need in-person instruction the most may be hesitant to return to our older facilities without additional assurance of their safety. Should the school system determine that these older facilities cannot provide an environment as safe as newer or renovated facilities, the school system must develop plans to ensure equitable availability of safe and appropriate facilities to everyone in the system.

We look forward to a response to questions about the safety of HCPSS facilities within Oakland Mills Village.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon L. Edelson", is placed on a light gray rectangular background.

Jonathan L. Edelson, Chairman
Oakland Mills Board of Directors
Jledelson.omca@gmail.com

cc: County Executive Dr. Calvin Ball
Howard County Councilmembers