



**Fairfax County Federation of Citizens' Associations
Remarks on the Proposed FY 2018 Fairfax County Public Schools Budget
Presented at the 30 January 2017 Fairfax County School Board Meeting**

My name is Nancy Trainer, and I am co-chair of the Education Committee of the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations. * Tonight, I am speaking on behalf of the Federation's Board.

We would like to commend the Proposed Budget's focus on maintaining instructional quality and improving the pay of Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) employees, while not targeting established programs for major cuts.

We agree that compensation is important in attracting and retaining a quality workforce, and to the extent that funds are available we support improving FCPS employee salaries. As in years past, we also urge you to explore flexible compensation packages, since younger employees may have different needs than employees close to retirement, and creative compensation packages could help recruit and retain staff without any additional spending.

If the proposed budget is not fully funded, we strongly urge you to spread the shortfall around the FCPS system rather than targeting particular established programs. We believe all stakeholders should share in sacrifice, to ensure that cuts are fair and equitable. In the past, we have seen programs pitted against one another, forced to engage in interest group politics. We hope you will reject that approach. We believe one of the strengths of FCPS is that it provides services in different programs based on what helps each child educationally rather than a "one size fits all" approach. It would be a sad state of affairs to start eliminating these programs that are part of the fabric of our county, and have succeeded over the years in meeting each child where they are.

In the longer term, we join you in your efforts to diversify the revenue base in Fairfax County, which could improve funding for our schools. The Federation's 2017 Legislative package proposes equalizing the revenue-generating authority of counties with that of cities. Currently, Virginia caps the tax rate that counties (but not cities) can apply to cigarettes, lodging and admissions. ** For example, Fairfax County can charge a county tobacco tax of up to \$0.30 per pack of cigarettes, whereas a number of neighboring cities charge much higher amounts. Alexandria charges \$1.15 a pack, the City of Fairfax \$0.85 a pack, and Falls Church \$0.75 a pack, to name a few. We hope we have your support in these and other efforts to diversify FCPS' funding sources.

Thank you for your collective service to the children in our communities, and for all the time you have spent on various school matters. We look forward to working together to help support our schools.

*The two co-chairs of the Education Committee are Nancy Trainer and Ed Saperstein.

**County-City revenue equalization would also provide counties with greater authority to enact a meals tax but, as you know, the meals tax was defeated last November.