

THE WORCESTER COUNTY BRANCH NAACP

**P. O. Box 251
Snow Hill, Maryland 21863**

April 7, 2009

Mr. James H. DeGraffenreidt, Jr., President
Maryland State Board of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Dear Mr. DeGraffenreidt:

Under the leadership of Dr. Jon Andes, the Worcester County Public Schools have demonstrated a firm commitment to the achievement of minority students. A recent report to the Worcester County school board indicated that African American students have made large gains in both Reading and Mathematics achievement since 2003. Scores of African Americans have increased by nearly 34% in Reading and more than 36% in Mathematics. Over 80% of African American students in the class of 2009 have passed the Algebra and Government assessments and over 70% have passed the Biology and English assessments. We have very good reason to believe that no African American student will fail to graduate solely because of State test results, provided that the student's vigorous academic curriculum is not interrupted.

However, the accelerated academic achievement of African American students and the elimination of achievement gaps continue to be critical issues in Worcester County. The progress we have made to date in closing the achievement gap has occurred because Dr. Andes has been provided excellent support and resources from the County Commissioners. At this time, the refusal of the County Commissioners to fund the Board of Education above maintenance of effort threatens the success of minority students. If the Board of Education budget is cut by 3%, teachers badly needed in the Pocomoke and Snow Hill areas where poor and large minority populations of at-risk students require small class sizes will be sent north where such conditions are minimal. In addition, textbooks and materials of instruction will be reduced for teachers across the entire County.

The Worcester County Branch of the NAACP stands firmly behind Dr. Jon Andes and the Worcester County Board of Education in requesting a maintenance of effort budget for fiscal year 2010. Even with that level of funding of the 2010 budget, there will be cuts in local funding added to increases in the cost of doing business which could result in over \$1.7 million loss to the school system. Teachers and students will feel the pain of belt tightening.

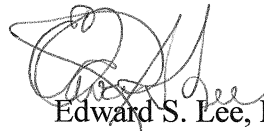
Mr. James H. DeGraffenreidt, Jr.

Page Two

April 7, 2009

Everyone understands that these are very difficult financial times. However, please reflect that these difficult times will last much longer with significant consequences if we allow these temporary financial circumstances to rob our most vulnerable at-risk student populations of their education. The County Commissioners have the financial capacity to fund a maintenance of effort budget. This is not the time to ignore investment in our children and their futures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward S. Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "L".

Edward S. Lee, President
Worcester County Branch, NAACP

pc: Worcester County Commissioners
Worcester County Board of Education
Dr. Ronda Jones