September 25, 2014

The Honorable Elijah Cummings

U.S. Congress, Maryland 7th District

2235 Rayburn HOB

Washington, D.C. 20515

**RE: Opposition to the CLOSURE OF BaLTIMORe’s NORTHWESTERN HIGH SCHOOL**

Dear Congressman Cummings:

As your constituent, I am writing to urge you to stop the planned closure of Northwestern High School in Baltimore City. While I applaud the efforts and support the vision outlined in the report, *21st Century Buildings for Our Kids: Baltimore City Public Schools Proposed 10 Year Plan*, I do not concur with the recommendation to close Northwestern. If we allow this closure, we do a tremendous disservice to the students and the community Northwestern serves. Northwestern High is excited to become a 21st Century School.

Celebrating its 50th year in 2016, Northwestern High School’s legacy has been tremendous and its desire to provide an excellent educational experience is strong. Enrollment is beyond projected numbers and programs are attracting new students. A diverse coalition of alumni, parents, students, city officials and community members and leaders speak in one voice to request that this school NOT be designated for closure. Rather than tearing down an institution that has served so many so well, we join together in asking that Dr. Gregory Thornton and the Baltimore City School Board bring new resources and energy for reclaiming and building upon Northwestern’s past academic excellence and preserving it for the benefit of future generations. We strongly believe that this would be the best and highest use of this very special high school campus. Upon your review of the following points, I trust that you will agree that Northwestern’s present and potential benefits to its students, community and the City of Baltimore far outweigh reasons for closure.

**Community Investment**

*The surrounding communities of Fallstaff, Glen, and Pimlico are actively involved with Northwestern, using the building for a variety of activities. Having made financial investments in the school facility and grounds such as new football bleachers, tennis courts, volleyball court, gymnasium, swimming pool, sound system (gymnasium and auditorium), air conditioning system (auditorium), dance room, Wi-Fi wiring throughout the school, renovated library and landscaping, totaling over $5 million in recent years, the community, city of Baltimore and alumni have continually invested in the school.*

**Geographic Location**

*Northwestern is one of the few high schools in Baltimore City that sits on 4.5 acres of grassland in a quiet, middle class neighborhood. A respite for many students, the peace and tranquility of the school’s physical space lends itself to a perfect studying environment free of the many social ills that plagues other city locations. Northwestern specifically services students who desire a more suburban setting. Close to the beltway, business centers and thriving upscale and various cultural communities, the location adds to the learning experience of its students--exposing them to new communities and cultures. The campus includes an off-street parking lot and plenty of open space for expansion. This northwest corridor will further benefit from the work of the Park Heights Renaissance in developing vacant and abandoned properties into a new and emerging diverse middle class neighborhood with robust retail and small business opportunities. A re-invigorated and improved Northwestern High School will serve as an important institutional anchor for completing the transformation of the new Park Heights into a thriving and vibrant community… quality homes, quality jobs, and quality schools.*

**An Exceptional Structure**

*The physical structure of the building is spacious with great amounts of natural light and windows- perfect opportunity to use the building as a solar collector. A fully restored greenhouse on its roof and other aspects of the building make Northwestern a great environmental resource that can be further developed into a full fledged “green” building—unique to other school or city structures.*

*The campus houses the Home and Hospital School, the city-wide teaching program for students physically unable to attend school.*

**Northwestern Alumni**

*To its credit, Northwestern High School claims many alumni success stories including some of Maryland’s top leadership: former mayor,* [*Sheila Dixon*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheila_Dixon)*; Judge Jack I. Lesser,* [*District Court of Maryland*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=District_Court_of_Maryland&action=edit&redlink=1)*,* [*Baltimore City*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltimore_City)*; Judge Barbara Waxman,* [*Judge*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judge)*,* [*District Court of Maryland*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=District_Court_of_Maryland&action=edit&redlink=1)*,* [*Baltimore City*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltimore_City)*; Joan Pratt, City Comptroller; State Sen. Verna Jones; former State Delegate David Shapiro; journalist and author Blair Walker; Laura Murphy, ACLU director; Keith Dorsey, Director of Baltimore County Office of Budget and Finance; and Chief Judge Michael Lee, Orphans’ Court - first Black and youngest person to be appointed a chief judge of any court in Maryland. This proud alumni heritage is the foundation for continued interest and participation in the school’s academic direction and future by generations of past Northwestern graduates and scholars. It is also a major resource for improving the overall quality of the educational experience for present and future students at the school.*

**Historical Significance**

*The historical significance of Northwestern High School as the City of Baltimore’s first fully racially integrated high school upon its opening must also be noted. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the student population at Northwestern was roughly 50% Jewish and 50% black, and the school’s talented faculty and staff were also fully integrated. The lifelong personal and professional relationships that were formed across racial and religious boundaries at this high school serve as a beacon and continuing reminder for present and future generations of students on how to build bridges across cultural divides through shared experiences in a quality educational environment.*

Again, I hope that you will do all you can to see that Northwestern High School is not closed. In that vein, I hope you will feel free to contact me to let me know what I can do to help you come to a resolution, and I look forward to hearing from you soon with news of what you are doing to address this issue.

Sincerely,

EMAIL:

PHONE:

ADDRESS: