

TO: APS School Board

FROM: Arlington CCPTA Executive Board

DATE: April 22, 2026

CC: Arlington County Civic Federation President
Arlington Civic Association Presidents
County Board Members
Arlington Public Schools PTA/PTSA Presidents
Arlington Public Schools Superintendent

The Arlington CCPTA Executive Board (“Executive Board”) has reviewed the School Board’s (“SB’s”) April 20, 2026 memorandum to Civic Association Presidents, and agrees that maintaining high-quality learning environments is a critical community priority. The Executive Board also appreciates the magnitude of the challenge the SB is facing to tackle the long-deferred maintenance needs of aging facilities, during what may be a time of rapidly increasing construction costs. It is for this very reason that the Executive Board asked the Schools Committee of Arlington County Civic Federation (“Schools Committee” and “Civic Federation,” respectively) to emphasize the importance of having a clear, transparent plan of how capital needs will be tackled and in what order, prior to the current SB committing the spending power of future SBs on school bonds.

Unlike many other school districts, Arlington school bonds are repaid using Arlington Public School’s (“APS’s”) operating budget (not the County’s), which reduces the amount available for other school spending, like teacher’s salaries. For this reason, we do not agree with any characterization that delaying school bond issuance somehow takes any money away from the schools – instead, it protects the right of the SB to exercise discretion in the future on spending decisions. Furthermore, in the current tight fiscal environment, Arlington faces an ever diminishing funding capacity if it is to maintain the coveted triple “A” rating of its bonds, making judicious and transparent decision-making as important as ever.

The Executive Board has grave concerns with regards to the clarity of previous APS and SB communications around capital improvements because many school communities are under the impression that renovations and/or maintenance repairs to their school facilities are happening soon. In reality, it is impossible to meet all of these expectations due to lack of available funding. The SB’s invitation to civic associations, in its memo, to switch to one-on-one engagement with the SB runs contrary to the goal of the Schools Committee’s Resolution (“Resolution”) of ensuring full transparency and clear communication. The Executive Board

instead encourages APS to engage with the Civic Federation and promote other county-wide discourse in open collective forums. We believe this is a better approach to communicating than in private silos.

The Resolution, “Preventing Crumbling School Buildings,” does not comment on school bonds in a vacuum; rather, it calls for a transparent, data-driven framework for planning and prioritizing the \$598 million in identified maintenance and renovation needs. Just as stated in the SB memo, the Long-Range plan and other feasibility studies done to date do not establish project priorities, funding commitments, project scopes, or implementation timelines for all known needs; however these are essential *before* proceeding with a referendum for new bonds. The Executive Board notes that APS’s Facility Condition Assessment (“FCA”) tool was developed using professional judgment to determine the expected year that system or facility maintenance will become necessary – but if the SB believes that particular projects can be deferred, we are asking that it identifies those projects and the approximate length of time for deferral.

It is precisely because not all needs will be met by the current Capital Improvement Plan (“CIP”), as stated in the SB memo, that this Resolution has been presented by the Schools Committee. Even at the lower cost options called for by the SB, the overall cost would exceed all known sources of funding as of this date. Similarly, the Executive Board was alarmed by the SB’s CIP guidance because it cannot be pursued in its entirety due to lack of funds. Accordingly, the Resolution requests that the SB determine what needs identified in the Long-Range Plan will not be resolved through 2037. Communities deserve to see which projects will be prioritized or delayed over the next decade.

We also wish to highlight a concerning SB practice of selectively disclosing costs of some projects and maintenance. The 2035 CIP Attachment A contained all the expected revenue for the entire 10 year time period, but then only indicated the costs or placeholder amounts for a few projects, drawing from the funds over all 10 years. That CIP made no provision for the vast majority of maintenance needs identified in the FCA by the SB’s own consultants. The SB’s current practice would be akin to a household budget only accounting for some but not all of the known bills, with maybe a placeholder for some groceries but no utilities. A household that fails to budget for all known expenses can easily run out of money towards the end – and this is exactly what the Resolution seeks to prevent for the 41 APS buildings that need maintenance.

Though Exhibit B of the Resolution entertains several scenarios, the most conservative estimates were used for each. For example, whenever feasibility study data was included, the lowest cost in a range was used and all potential maintenance needs for that facility were subtracted to avoid any possible duplication of costs, regardless of whether the remodeling contemplated cured all the known problems at the facility. So, contrary to what was insinuated

in the SB memo, there was no duplication of costs in these scenario estimates. Also, the cost projections used were those that were developed by professional consultants hired by APS and provided to the public, which were recently updated in November 2025 (and may be even higher upon execution, given potential inflation). Furthermore, the Resolution explicitly accounted for continuing maintenance funding from the operating budget by assuming \$5M each year in MC/MM funding, totaling \$50M across a ten-year CIP planning period, which is a reasonable reflection of past expenditures on annual maintenance funding. **Therefore, all calculations presented in the Resolution are non-duplicative and are based on the most conservative of possible estimates – and we still won't have enough money to do even a fraction of what the SB has been developing plans to do.**

The Schools Committee is currently working on refining the Resolution that was presented last week at the Civic Federation based on the valuable community feedback it received. The Executive Board will be submitting a requested amendment to be more specific about improvements needed, as well as to postpone any decision by the Civ Fed on whether to support particular bond referenda based on progress made by APS and the SB, rather than establishing no support by default.

Additionally, the Executive Board will be requesting an amendment to the Resolution that calls for APS to publish a user-friendly public dashboard. This dashboard should list open work orders by school, submission dates, and projected completion timelines to ensure localized accountability. The Executive Board notes that APS already collects all this information, but PTA leaders and parents have met resistance in the past when requesting this data. Note that these are just proposals at this stage for Schools Committee consideration.

The Executive Board would like to bring to your attention that it has raised these concerns repeatedly with the SB, the Superintendent, and APS staff, including during public comment periods at SB meetings, for several years without any progress. We too consistently encourage engagement with the SB and APS, but we need discourse on this matter to be done publicly so that it raises awareness amongst the community of the need to prioritize the most urgent and best use of the limited funds. In addition, developing a comprehensive, transparent and trackable capital plan will bolster public support for bonds because the plan will address how to tackle needs across all our schools over time. **We look forward to being enthusiastic supporters of school bonds that emerge from such a plan.** Consequently, we find it necessary now to call upon our membership and the Civic Federation to advocate for the transparent planning required to ensure that these vital maintenance needs are no longer overlooked.

Finally, we welcome the SB's cost containment efforts and look forward to reviewing the findings of the SB's analysis. We are very much aware that the SB hasn't taken action yet, which is why this Resolution is timed to help guide the SB in its engagement with the public and the

decisions it takes in June and prior to a bond referendum in November. The CCPTA looks forward to participating in and fostering continued community engagement on this critical community priority, in support of our community's learning environments.

Sincerely,

Claire Noakes

President, Arlington CCPTA