City of Parma Heights, Ohio

Office of Mayor Michael P. Byrne

www.parmaheightsoh.gov

6281 Pearl Road 440-884-9604 Parma Heights, Ohio 44130

October 4, 2016

Dear Parma City School Board Members:

As the elected officials of the City of Parma Heights, we are the guardians of the public interest for our residents, friends and neighbors. In this capacity we have jointly signed this letter, written to express our comments and concerns regarding the PCSD's Fiscal Recovery Plan and its effect on the future of our community.

We acknowledge the extremely difficult position in which the Board and the Superintendent have been placed. We understand the enormity of the mandate imposed by the Ohio Department of Education to cut $15 million from the PCSD's budget and the inherent pain such a decision will cause the students, educators, families, prospective families, and community at large.

We are very concerned about the impact that such a plan will have on all three communities participating in the PCSD, particularly the loss of tax revenue income from eliminated jobs and potential impact that a weakened school system can have on property values.

Our opposition to the proposed Fiscal Recovery Plan focuses on three areas:

1) The proposed closing of Parma Park Elementary School
2) The elimination of the successful STEM program
3) The re-purposing of Valley Forge High School

We find it absolutely unacceptable to think that the closing of Parma Park Elementary School (the only PCSD elementary school remaining in Parma Heights after previous school closings) will leave a community of 20,700 residents without the identity of a neighborhood public elementary school.

It is unfortunate that a revenue neutral program like the STEM is viewed to be expendable under the proposed Fiscal Recovery Plan. If the cost of transportation is the only stumbling block to keep this program intact, we feel there must be other viable alternatives (such as an "open enrollment/transfer only" school) to keep it operational for the entire PCSD.

Parma Heights is proud of the partnerships our community leaders have formed with all our neighborhood schools and in particular the STEM program. We represent both the parents of children participating in the STEM program, and the children themselves,

whom we have witnessed thriving in the unique scholastic environment offered by this program.

For these reasons, we are proposing that Parma Park Elementary School remain open, and be re-purposed as the location within which to operate the STEM program. We acknowledge that this change would require a review of re-purposed savings and alternate proposed reductions; however, we firmly believe that this suggestion is in the best interest of the PCSD students, parents and taxpayers.

We are equally concerned with the proposed re-purposing of Valley Forge High School and respectfully encourage the PCSD Board to request an additional extension from the Ohio Department of Education. Recent information provided by the public policy think tank, Innovation Ohio, has generated the following concerns: 1) the negative relationship between increased school size and test scores of math & verbal ability tests and 2) the fact that the One High School consolidation plan is seeking to cut building operations, essentially the "leanest" part of the district's overall operation expenses.

We appreciate your consideration of our request to amend your Fiscal Recovery Plan as we believe our proposal will keep our communities stronger and ensure that our children's future will equal, and hopefully surpass, the successes of the past.

Respectfully,

Michael P. Byrne
Mayor

Marie Gallo, Ward 4
Council President

JoAnn Koch, Ward 3
Council ProTem

Renee Everett, Ward 1
Councilwoman

Annette Danczak, Ward 2
Councilwoman

James McCall, At-Large
Councilman

Anthony Stavole, At-Large
Councilman

Robert Verdile, At-Large
Councilman

cc: PCSD Superintendent Carl Hilling
David C. Crowley, PCSD Treasurer/CFO
Rusty Kuse, PCSD Business Manager
Mayor Timothy DeGeeter, City of Parma
Mayor Richard Dell'Aquila, City of Seven Hills

Members of Parma City Council
Members of Seven Hills City Council
Governor John Kasich
Paolo DeMaria, Superintendent of Public Instruction, ODE
State Senator Michael Skindell
State Representative Martin Sweeney
State Representative Nick Celebreeze
State Representative Marlene Anielski