

From: [Rachel Spicknall Mulford](#)
To: [Clerk of the Council](#)
Subject: Written testimony for Oct 6th hearing -- Opposing McDonald's DSP22001
Date: Thursday, September 25, 2025 1:05:55 PM

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Dear Ms. Donna J Brown,

I submit this written testimony to the County Council for the hearing on Monday, October 6th. I'm registered as a Person of Record. The following is the same testimony, with a few edits, that I submitted to the Planning Board in June 2025.

I ask the council to disapprove Detailed Site Plan 22001 (DSP-22001) – McDonald's on Ager Road.

The intersection of Rt 410 and Ager Road is already dangerous.

My child is a student in second grade and I'm a member of the PTO at César Chavez Dual Spanish Immersion School, which is about a quarter of a mile from the site. I drive my daughter and other children in our carpool to school and we pass through this intersection every day. I've experienced first hand hundreds of times how congested and dangerous it is because many drivers have to change lanes, sometimes at the last second. I almost had a collision there myself just a few months ago.

The "Food Swamp effect" leads to poor health for our youth. Please see below for data from peer-reviewed studies.

Of great concern to me is the preponderance of low quality, high calorie food establishments which makes this area a food swamp. Food swamps are associated with increased obesity and associated poorer health outcomes, and this "food swamp effect" is even stronger in areas with greater income inequality [Cooksey-Stowers et al., 2017].

In 2020 the Prince George's Healthcare Action Coalition (PGHAC), Health Department, and Prince George's County Food Equity Council worked together to map healthy food retailers and food swamps in the county. The site of DSP22001 is within a Healthy Food Priority Area (HFPA), as designated by their findings, along with many areas nearby. These areas are essentially areas where there is greater access to unhealthy foods than healthy options, where families are less likely to have access to reliable transportation, and where families are more likely to live below the Maryland Self-Sufficiency Standard. [Read more on their findings: <https://princegeorges.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/9f9202c51cc345ab9e0e1aa21a23bb76>]

There is a lot of data from peer-reviewed public health studies that specifically links fast food restaurants near schools with negative outcomes for children and youth.

One study that looked at younger students found that the more fast-food retailers there were surrounding a school, the more likely a student was to be overweight and that students in grade 5 were at increased risk relative to students in grades 6-8. [Leatherdale ST, Pouliou T, Church D, Hobin E. The association between overweight and opportunity structures in the built environment: A multi-level analysis among elementary school youth in the PLAY-ON study.

International Journal of Public Health. 2011;56(3):237–246.]

A large study that included data from over 500,000 students found that those with fast food restaurants within a half mile of their school consumed less produce, consumed more soda, and were more likely to be overweight or obese than those without fast food restaurants near their schools (even when controlling for individual and school-level characteristics). [Davis B, Carpenter C. Proximity of fast-food restaurants to schools and adolescent obesity. *Am J Public Health*. 2009 Mar;99(3):505-10. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2008.137638. Epub 2008 Dec 23. PMID: 19106421; PMCID: PMC2661452.]

Another study found that among 9th graders, having a fast food restaurant within 0.1 miles of school results in a 5.2% increase in obesity rates. [Currie J, DellaVigna S, Moretti E, Pathania V. The Effect of Fast Food Restaurants on Obesity and Weight Gain. *Am Econ J-Econ Polic*. 2010;2(3):32–63]

This is only a sample, not a comprehensive list of the data available. The important thing to remember is that with public health evidence, the idea is not that any one study will definitively prove anything. It's that when we look at an issue in different places and different ways, as the above studies do, and we see a common pattern emerging, it's the totality of the evidence that creates meaning.

Here in Prince George's County, we know that we also face challenges from obesity. In 2021, obesity rates among our youth were higher than they've ever been. The obesity rate among adolescents ages 12 to 19 was 21.3%. The proportion of high school students who were overweight or obese was almost double that, at 39.9%. The Maryland SHIP (State Health Improvement Plan) 2014 target is to reduce the proportion of students ages 12 to 19 who are obese to 11.3%. That target has not been met.

[<https://www.pgchealthzone.org/indicators/index/view?indicatorId=2250&localeId=1260>]

"Obesity at a young age is associated with higher premature mortality risk in adulthood. Youth who are obese have a higher risk of suffering from diabetes, hyperlipidemia (high levels of cholesterol in the blood, stemming from a diet high in fat), and hypertension (high blood pressure, which is affected by salt intake, general health, and hormone levels) diseases, which can persist into adulthood. Obesity is certainly a very serious disease. Obesity is not only considered a chronic disease itself but also may be the cause of other chronic diseases. Most of these chronic diseases can be managed by following a healthy and balanced diet. Preventing and controlling chronic disease is the number two priority in the *Prince George's County Health Improvement Plan 2011 to 2014, Blueprint for a Healthier Community*." This quote is taken from the Prince George's County Food System Study, Part 2 Broader Challenges in Accessing Healthy Food. [<https://www.pgplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Part-2-Broader-challenges-in-accessing-healthy-food.pdf>]

The proposed site is within the walkshed of three elementary schools.

I believe that the sight of another McDonald's on my daughter's ride to school is not only unnecessary, it's harmful. Kids spend a lot of time watching out of the window while we drive, and on the bus. They absorb what they watch and learn passively about the world around them. The marketing team at fast food restaurants know this. It's a subconscious visual story of the world outside, a world where McDonald's is located at every major intersection, which implies "This is a good thing and people want it because it's everywhere!" That marketing

message is antithetical to what is common knowledge about healthy eating. What we're teaching my kids at home and what the curriculum teaches in the schools about a healthy food lifestyle, is one where half of your plate is made up of fruits and vegetables and you need to consume certain ingredients in moderation, particularly refined sugar, saturated fats, and salt. That's common knowledge, but it's not reflected in the food that is affordable and readily available in a food swamp.

A McDonald's at this location negatively impacts the local retail ecosystem.

A community is better served by variety in the retail landscape, not repeats. There are five other McDonald's restaurants in a 2 mile radius. No one is asking for another one. Local businesses bring a competitive edge to the local economy because they have a powerful and inherent component that no national retailer can offer. They have uniqueness.

Plus, small business revenue stays in local communities, and small business owners often provide neighborhood leadership. Linked to that, it is well-known that small businesses are more likely to contribute to local charitable causes. In the Cesar Chavez PTO we know this first hand. We collect sponsorships during our spring family festival fundraiser Si Se Puede, and raise thousands of dollars to funnel right back into the needs and enrichments for our students. While national/multinational corporations which we reach out to are rarely enticed by our charitable marketing offers, for the fourth year in a row we've had a hugely successful fundraiser with engaged local businesses as our sponsors and silent auction donors. In return we advertise these businesses to the school families.

I respectfully urge you to push for greater food equity and a more resilient local economy by disapproving Detailed Site Plan 22001 – McDonald's on Ager Road.

Please ensure that this letter is included in the public record for DSP-22001 and that I am registered as a Person of Record in this case.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

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