EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed project, *Healthy School Communities: Building the Capacity of Local School Wellness Councils*, focuses on the evidence-based strategy of developing Local School Wellness Councils (LSWCs) in an initial group of four Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in the Long Branch/Takoma Park, Gaithersburg, and Germantown areas of the county to build the capacity of local schools to improve nutrition, reduce food insecurity, and increase physical activity in the school environment. Targeted ZIP codes in the selected areas include critical pockets of poverty and residents in those areas experience some of the worst health inequities in the county.

Partners on the project include the Healthy Montgomery Eat Well Be Active School Work Group; MCPS; Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services; Holy Cross Health; the Maryland Department of Education; the University of Maryland School of Medicine, Maryland Wellness Policies and Practices Project Team; Action for Healthy Kids (AHK) and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. Through this collaboration and the provision of technical assistance and resources to local schools, the primary project results will include: (1) Local school communities at targeted schools will have increased capacity and knowledge to advocate for healthier school environments; (2) Local school communities will have made progress toward changing the school environment (through policy and systems change) to improve healthy eating and active living; and (3) Local School Wellness Councils in targeted schools will have the capacity to sustain their work beyond the grant period.

This proposed project offers a unique opportunity to leverage a high-profile new initiative, the Transforming Communities Initiative, which utilizes community partnerships to focus on policy, systems, and environmental strategies that reduce obesity and chronic disease. It will provide a blueprint for replicating effective LSWCs across the Montgomery County school system and across Maryland. The funding request is for $89,980 (Year One: $28,412; Year Two: $61,569).