
TAO1-FY2026 Testimony

From James Cecil <jamescecil02@gmail.com>
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To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

 1 attachment (764 KB)

CC Testimony CB10-2026 & TAO1-FY2026.docx;

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Dear Councilmembers,

I just submitted testimony for CB-10 and am attaching my supporting documentation to this testimony as well, but I would implore you to request and receive a full accounting of what is actually in the coffers of Project E1058 vs publicly presented and County approved expenditures. There seem to be significant gaps that generate a situation where \$7.6M can just be "found" when another project is experiencing overruns. This \$7.6M out of at least \$10.587M in the two projects (LKMS & SJLES HVAC) I tracked is more than the redistribution of publicly documented contingencies on completed projects that were publicly built into a project's budget, such as those that were transferred to Project E1038 via TAO02-FY2025. It should be met with more scrutiny than those transfers. Again, the OMMS project needs to be funded, but there is something that does not seem right with this much money being available without corresponding reductions in other planned projects. If everything was requested ethically along the way, this money should be dedicated elsewhere already. However, HCPSS says it comes from savings realized via projects that have completed contracts (\$27.0M combined) above what was estimated in FY23 (\$22.7M) and when the estimates were increased in the FY24 cycle (\$25.014M).

As an update/reminder about another issue that HCPSS repeats and why I am concerned, you all approved the aforementioned TAO02-2025 364 days ago to fund a P3 study to hopefully build towards a feasible solution to addressing our need to renovate aging schools, build new capacity and fund systemic renovations. This was an FY2025 allocation, that to date has not had a contract presented to the Board for approval. The last time I asked in the fall, this had not even gone to bid yet.

It would just be nice to have trust in these requests and a reporting structure that ensures accountability that the goal was ever actually achieved. Outcomes currently get lost as the next emergency arises and there is no structure for what exactly happened with millions of dollars. Not sure

it should be part of this legislation, CB10 or new legislation entirely, but it needs to happen to ensure the fiscal integrity of where the majority of county funds are allocated

Thank you,
James Cecil
Elkridge, MD

As much as I want to just say “please give HCPSS the money so they can fix our schools,” I continue to have very little faith in the outcome matching the investment the county would be making. HCPSS is an addict that continues to be overdue for an intervention and unfettered access to tens of millions of dollars is counterproductive to initiating behavior reforms.

There is a neverending cycle of either manipulating deadlines to avoid critical analysis of what is being presented or a complete inability/unwillingness to spend the months between cycles doing the due diligence shown to be required.

Case and point in the Lime Kiln & St. John’s Lane HVAC replacement projects that are the funding sources conveniently available for TAO1-2026.

It is admittedly challenging to keep track of the paper trail, but this is the timeline that I could put together with publicly available documents as of today:

May 26, 2022 - The Beginning (per June 12, 2025 Bids & Contracts justification for approval of Lime Kiln Contract PC-69)

Board of Education adopts their FY2023-2028 Long-Range Systemic Renovation Projects, which included:

FY 2023-2028 Long-Range Systemic Renovation Projects								
Board of Education’s Approved								May 26, 2022
(In Thousands)								
Project	FY 2023 Local	FY 2023 State CIP	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	Totals
Applications and Research Lab Maintenance	\$ 1,500	\$ -	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ 6,000
West Friendship ES MBR/Well	1,000	-	3,000	2,650	-	-	-	6,650
Grounds/Fleet Infrastructure Capital Needs	665	-	736	645	544	543	-	3,133
HCPSS portion of Artificial Turf Replacement	315	-	331	348	365	383	-	1,742
Guilford ES Exterior Windows/Doors	499	801	-	-	-	-	-	1,300
Manor Woods ES Waste Water Treatment Plant	3,000	-	3,000	-	-	-	-	6,000
Jeffers Hill ES Boiler Replacement	231	369	-	-	-	-	-	600
Manor Woods ES HVAC Replacement	1,840	6,160	2,000	-	-	-	-	10,000
Forest Ridge ES Boiler Replacement	-	-	600	-	-	-	-	600
Ilchester ES HVAC Replacement	-	-	5,000	5,000	-	-	-	10,000
Atholton ES Boiler Replacement	-	-	-	600	-	-	-	600
St Johns Lane ES HVAC Replacement	-	-	-	5,000	5,000	-	-	10,000
Mayfield Woods MS Boiler Replacement	-	-	-	-	-	600	-	600
Lime Kiln MS HVAC Replacement	-	-	-	-	-	6,700	6,000	12,700

*Worth noting that there are no FY2023 State CIP funds indicated and that the combined estimated total for both projects is \$22.7M.

May 25, 2023 - Numbers Change

Board of Education adopts their FY2024-2029 Long-Range Systemic Renovations Projects, which included:

FY 2024-2029 Long-Range Systemic Renovation Projects

Board of Education Approved

May 25, 2023

(In Thousands)

Project	FY 2024 Local	FY 2024 State CIP	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	Totals
Applications and Research Lab Maintenance	\$ 1,500	\$ 3,719	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 8,219
West Friendship ES MBR/Well	1,550	1,450	2,650	-	-	-	-	5,650
Grounds/Fleet Infrastructure Capital Needs	736	-	645	544	543	-	-	2,468
HCPSS portion of Artificial Turf Replacement	600	-	600	600	600	-	-	2,400
Jeffers Hill ES Boiler Replacement	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	100
Manor Woods ES Waste Water Treatment Plant	1,332	1,668	-	-	-	-	-	3,000
Manor Woods ES HVAC Replacement	2,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,000
Forest Ridge ES Boiler Replacement	397	503	-	-	-	-	-	900
St Johns Lane ES HVAC Replacement	5,570	2,713	5,000	-	-	-	-	13,283
Retrofit Gym HVAC (AC)	2,638	2,929	5,000	5,000	5,000	-	-	20,567
Elevator Replacements	1,308	1,522	-	-	-	-	-	2,830
Atholton ES Boiler Replacement	486	513	-	-	-	-	-	999
Lime Kiln MS HVAC Replacement	2,566	3,011	6,154	-	-	-	-	11,731

The cost of the two projects has mysteriously increased to a combined \$25.014M from the FY2023 estimate of \$22.7M. The increased estimate now includes \$5.724M in State CIP.

St. John's Lane banked \$8.283M in FY2024

Lime Kiln banked \$5.577M in FY2024

The projects combined to bank **\$13.86M** in FY2024.

Despite having the requested funds approved and presumably received, neither of these projects were put to bid until FY2026.

May 23, 2024 - Numbers Change Again

Board of Education adopts their FY2025-2030 Long-Range Systemic Renovations Projects, which included:

FY 2025-2030 Long-Range Systemic Renovation Projects								
Board of Education's Approved								
(In Thousands)								
May 23, 2024								

Project	FY 2025 Local	FY 2025 State CIP	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	Totals
Applications and Research Lab Maintenance	1,000	\$ -	1,000	1,000	-	-	-	3,000
Manor Woods ES HVAC Replacement	4,640	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,640
West Friendship ES MBR/Well	3,828	1,538	-	-	-	-	-	5,366
Grounds/Fleet Infrastructure Capital Needs	736	\$ -	544	543	-	-	-	1,823
HCPSS portion of Artificial Turf Replacement	600	-	600	600	600	600	600	3,600
St Johns Lane ES HVAC Replacement	2,558	2,442	-	-	-	-	-	5,000
Retrofit Gym HVAC (AC)	5,813	4,187	-	-	5,000	5,000	5,000	25,000
Lime Kiln MS HVAC Replacement	3,444	2,710	7,573	-	-	-	-	13,727

St. John's Lane was used to bank an additional \$5M in FY2025.

The total State CIP banked for SJLES between FY2024-FY2025 was \$5.155M.

The total banked for SJLES between FY2024-FY2025 was **\$10.155M**.

Lime Kiln was used to bank an additional \$6.154M in FY2025.

The total State CIP banked for LKMS between FY2024-FY2025 was \$5.721M.

The total banked for LKMS between FY2024-FY2025 was **\$11.875M**.

The projects combined to bank **\$11.154M** in FY2025.

The projects combined to bank **\$25.014M** between FY2024-FY2025.

The initial funding request in FY2023 was **\$22.7M**.

These projects were funded **\$2.314M** above the initial estimates through FY2025.

Despite having the requested funds approved and presumably received, neither of these projects were put to bid until FY2026.

June 12, 2025 - Numbers Expand & Contract

Board of Education adopts their FY2026-2031 Long-Range Systemic Renovations Projects, which included:

FY 2026-2031 Long-Range Systemic Renovation Projects										
Board of Education's Approved 6/12/2025										
(In Thousands)										
Project	FY 2026 Local	FY2026 Board State CIP Requested	FY 2026 State CIP Allocation	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031	Board FY26 Requested	Totals
Applications and Research Lab Maintenance	5,000		\$ -	5,000	-	-	-	-	10,000	10,000
Grounds/Fleet Infrastructure Capital Needs	300		-	543	-	-	-	-	843	843
HCPSS portion of Artificial Turf Replacement	600		-	600	600	600	600	600	3,600	3,600
St Johns Lane ES HVAC Replacement	5,000		-	-	-	-	-	-	5,000	5,000
Lime Kiln MS HVAC Replacement	7,573		-	-	-	-	-	-	7,573	7,573
Secure Vestibules (MS) #1	629	553	483	-	-	-	-	-	1,182	1,665
Secure Vestibules (HS) #1	57	49	43	-	-	-	-	-	106	149
Secure Vestibules (HS) #2	268	232	204	-	-	-	-	-	500	704
Long Reach HS Envelope	-	-	-	6,000	6,000	2,000	-	-	14,000	14,000
Harper's Choice MS Chiller and Cooling Tower Replacement	400	416	457	-	-	-	-	-	816	1,273
Reservoir HS Cooling Tower Replacement	400	416	457	-	-	-	-	-	816	1,273
Howard HS Windows	489	1,121	1,122	390	-	-	-	-	2,000	3,122
Murray Hill MS Chiller and Boiler Replacement	571	595	653	-	-	-	-	-	1,166	1,819
Secure Vestibules (HS) #3	71	66	46	-	-	-	-	-	137	183
Secure Vestibules (HS) #4	90	84	68	-	-	-	-	-	174	242
Secure Vestibules (HS) #5	991	912	808	-	-	-	-	-	1,903	2,711
Secure Vestibules (MS) #2	822	758	732	-	-	-	-	-	1,580	2,312
Mayfield Woods MS Boiler Replacement	320	280	449	-	-	-	-	-	600	1,049
Bonnie Branch MS - Gym AC	363	325	325	-	-	-	-	-	688	1,013
Ellicott Mills MS - Gym AC	363	325	325	-	-	-	-	-	688	1,013
Mayfield Woods MS - Gym AC	363	325	325	-	-	-	-	-	688	1,013
Fulton ES - Gym AC	264	231	254	-	-	-	-	-	495	749
Manor Woods ES Septic	3,461	4,207	3,699	-	-	-	-	-	7,668	11,367
West Friendship ES Septic and Well	-	4,709	4,407	-	-	-	-	-	4,709	9,116

St. John's Lane was used to bank an additional \$5M in FY2026.

The total banked for SJLES FY2024-FY2026 was **\$15.155M**.

Lime Kiln was used to bank an additional \$7.573M in FY2026.

The total banked for LKMS FY2024-FY2026 was **\$19.448M**.

The projects combined to bank **\$12.573M** in FY2026.

The projects combined to bank **\$37.587M** between FY2024-FY2026.

The initial funding request in FY2023 was **\$22.7M**.

These projects were funded **\$14.887M** above the initial estimates through FY2026.

June 12, 2025 - Lime Kiln Contract Approved by Board of Education for \$12.847M

PC-69 LIME KILN MIDDLE SCHOOL HVAC REPLACEMENT
Excel Mechanical Contractors, LLC

\$12,847,000.00

In the justification for approving the LKMS project, staff noted that "This project has a State funding aspect that having been approved as a part of the Fiscal year 23 allocation is on the State "fiscal cliff."":

If not approved at this BOE Meeting, what are the ramifications:	This project has a State funding aspect that, having been approved as a part of the Fiscal year 23 allocation is on the State "fiscal cliff". If the contracts are not approved by the Board and submitted to the State for approval before June 30, 2025 the project chances the loss of State funding.
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This brinksmanship is despite staff reporting in their April 9th Monthly Construction Report that bids for this project were received on April 8th:

Lime Kiln Middle School Systemic HVAC Replacement (Project E1058)

Design Percentage Complete: 100%
 Estimated Construction Cost: \$13.3 M
 Next Milestone Date: Submission of Bids received to the Board May 2025

The Lime Kiln Middle School project is a systemic project for the replacement of the existing Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system and its components. HCPSS has received approval from the State to advertise for public bid. The project was bid, and bids were received yesterday. The bids received are being reviewed and will be presented to the Board when a recommendation has been made. The project’s construction will occur during the summers of 2026, 2027, and 2028. This first summer and the school year will be used to complete project submittals and procure equipment.

The Board did have one more scheduled meeting on June 26th if they did want to risk the “fiscal cliff” to better review what was presented.

Again, the Lime Kiln project was used to bank **\$19.448M** and staff presented a contract for \$12.847M, for a difference of **\$6.614M**.

July 17, 2025 - Month School Construction Report Updates

The Lime Kiln Project portion of the Report was updated to indicate that the contractor was approved and executed.

Lime Kiln Middle School Systemic HVAC Replacement (Project E1058)

Percentage of Completed Construction: 0%
 Cost to Complete Construction (including contingency): \$12.8 M
 Construction Completion: August 2028

The Lime Kiln contractor was approved by the Board at the June 12, 2025, Board meeting. The contract has been executed with the contractor and returned. The first phase of construction is scheduled to begin in June 2026. The contractor and design team will use the time between now and June 2026 for review/approval of construction submittals, and procurement of material and equipment, especially long lead items for the first summer of construction.

There is also an update on the St. John’s Lane project that there were no successful bids received by the June 16th deadline and would be reopened until August 5th. There is no mention of a “fiscal cliff” despite seemingly being on the same timeline as the Lime Kiln project and being allocated \$5.155M.

There is also no mention of the \$6.614M surplus in funds from the Lime Kiln project despite a now executed contract.

September 25, 2025 - St. John’s Lane Contract Approved by Board of Education for \$14,219,922M

PC-07 ST JOHN'S LANE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HVAC REPLACEMENT *

Oak Contracting, Inc.

\$14,219,922.00

St. John's Lane Elementary School Systemic HVAC Replacement (Project E1058)

Percentage of Completed Construction: 0%

Cost to Complete Construction (including contingency): \$14.2 M

Construction Completion: August 2027

The Board approved the St. John's Lane contractor at the September 25, 2025, Board meeting. The contract has been fully executed, and the purchase order (PO) has been created. Construction will begin in June 2026. The CM and design team are collaborating with the contractor to complete the product submittal process and order equipment to prepare for the start of construction.

Given the insufficient supply of capital revenue streams and limited bond capacity currently experienced in Howard County, numerous projects and initiatives are impacted by whatever practice led to HCPSS requesting *and receiving* \$37.587M for two projects that they projected at \$22.7M and ultimately awarded contracts for \$27.0M. In calculating waste, much of that \$4.3M cost increase is most assuredly connected to the predictable impacts of inflation and variable of tariffs that could have been avoided if these projects were bid and scheduled at the time the county did their part to fund them.