

CK63-2020

Sayers, Margery

From: Lisa Schlossnagle <lisabmrss@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 7, 2020 4:07 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: budget testimony - education
Attachments: Council Budget Testimony 5May2020.pdf

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Good afternoon,

My budget testimony is attached.

All the best,
Lisa Schlossnagle
Fulton, MD

HOWARD COUNTY FY21 OPERATING BUDGET TESTIMONY

Lisa Schlossnagle

May 5, 2020

Many have said that our public school system is the great economic driver of our county and that it's functioning is vital to the high quality of life we enjoy here.

Not only do our schools provide Blue Ribbon-level learning communities, but they serve as first responders to a variety of human needs in our county. Schools provide critical nutrition to tens of thousands of children through one or two meals every day. Teachers and other school staff notice when children experience mental and physical illness, be that impaired vision or infection or depression. They observe students struggling with poverty and its manifestations such as transportation problems or food insecurity or homelessness. School staff marshal school and county resources to assist the families overcome the challenge at hand.

It seems to me that all of the difficult budget decisions you must make for this cycle have to be viewed through the prism of meeting human needs, including safety and security. These needs for safety and security go beyond protecting our physical bodies from imminent harm. They include emotional security, financial security, and overall health and wellbeing. We cannot learn or work without these needs met well enough.

Mental health services are among the key ways we will meet our students' needs for safety and security, especially so in the coming year. Invest in this.

Special education services are also key to meeting our students' needs, both those students receiving those services directly and those in general education. ought to be funded at federal compliance level. They are barely there right now, flat funding will cause them to fall below compliance, and then we will be in a double-bind of not sufficiently keeping children safe and ready to learn and having financial penalties and costs in terms of federal penalties and individual lawsuits.

Continue to fund early intervention services as robustly as you can, because prevention is less expensive over time than remediation. For our community college and library system, fund them sufficiently so they can continue to meet the educational needs of all in our county, especially the needs of adults seeking new credentials for employment.

Finally, the County Executive's budget proposal relies on raising rates on two revenue streams. Approve those increases to the recordation and transfer taxes, please.

Sayers, Margery

From: Jackie <jacquelyndebella@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 7, 2020 8:33 AM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: 2020-2021 budget

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Dr. Ball and County Council Members,

I am concerned about the current lack of funding for the school system . My husband and I have been residents of Howard County since 1997. We both work in the county and have two elementary aged children .

I would like to share the direct impact your lack of funding had on our children. Last year, I sat at the budget meeting in May. I listened to Mr. Martirano and the BOE review each line item of the budget. Curriculum and services which were needs not wants were drastically cut back. The elementary budget took the biggest hit losing paraeducators , half of the technology time , special education , and reading and math support. Research has shown that earlier intervention is critical and yet the elementary level was the biggest cut. Middle school lost reading and math support. High school was not impacted.

My son has autism and epilepsy. He has an IEP. When he started 3rd grade this year, members of his special education team were no longer there. He was struggling . This led to incidents such as leaving the classroom for up two hours. He became combative and had to be placed in an isolation room. I was notified by the school that they were thinking about calling the mobile crisis unit. My son has had an IEP since he was 4 in Howard County . He would be labeled a success story until this year. The lack of special education funding impacted his level of support and what the school could realistically do with the staffing they had. My husband and I have spent thousands of dollars on an autism specialist , a behavior therapist , medicine , and an epilepsy behavior specialist at Kennedy Krieger to ensure our son could be calm and successful at school.

My daughter has had limited technology education as the preschool she attended did not offer computers . Last year was the first year she was exposed technology. She had an hour of technology once a week. Then the school system cut all the classes in half. In first grade, 30 minutes was barely enough time to log in and do one activity . When I observed my son's class, it even took some 3rd graders 30 minutes to log in with assistance . Now that we are home for distance learning, my first grader did not have the technology training to do most activities online. She requires a lot of support due to her lack of experience . In addition, her grade did have a paraeducator. First and second grade had to share the same person . This put additional stress on the teachers to do a lot of prep work for learning and stuffing the Thursday folders instead of teaching .

I understand we are in a global pandemic with the Covid -19 situation . Our students will need the support of the teachers and staff more than ever to survive . We can not cut the curriculum and staffing in our schools. If staffing cuts are made , we lose the experience those teachers and paraeducators have. We lost the paraeducator who had been with my son since kindergarten . She kept him calm and focused every day. He loved school. No one this year was able to recreate that for him and he had incident after incident .

Dr. Ben Carson states " The choices we make are long lasting and life changing ". You have the opportunity to impact the future in a positive way . Please fully fund the budget and rewrite history . Give our students the full curriculum again. Provide appropriate support staff. Enable the board of education to truly do what is needed for our students .

When the school buildings are open, our students will need every staff member and all the pieces of the curriculum. They have lost enough already.

Thank you for your kind consideration to the needs of our students .

Sincerely ,
Jacquelyn DeBella

Sent from my iPhone

Sayers, Margery

From: Zo Tum Hmung <zotumhmung@cianusa.org>
Sent: Wednesday, May 6, 2020 1:55 PM
To: Sayers, Margery
Cc: CouncilMail; Tim Siemens
Subject: My written testimony ATTACHED
Attachments: Written Testimony byZTHmung 5-6-20.pdf

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Ms. Sayers,

Thank you for allowing me to submit my written testimony for the FY2021 Operational Budget FY2021 Public Hearing - Education today, May 6 at 6:30pm or the record. Attached please find it. Thanks again for your assistance.

All the best,

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Zo Tum Hmung
Executive Director
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Written Testimony by Zo Tum Hmung, Executive Director

Chin Integration and Advocacy Network USA

Operating Budget FY2021 Public Hearing- Education (HCPSS), Howard County Council
6:30 PM, May 6, 2020 (zotumhmung@cianusa.org)

Honorable Council Chairperson Jung:

I am Zo Tum Hmung, Executive Director of Chin Integration and Advocacy Network USA (CIANUSA). On behalf of the Chin community in Howard County, I am submitting this written testimony urging the Council to consider a Chin Liaison position for the FY2021 Operational Budget. The role of the Liaison at Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) is to facilitate communication and understanding across cultures and education systems between teachers and school officials and Chin families.

Approximately, 400 Chin students are studying in the HCPSS from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The Chin people are an ethnic nationality from Burma. Many of our families have been resettled as refugees in the United States, having fled ethnic and religious persecution. A sizeable number of us now make Howard County, Maryland our home.

On February 4, 2019, I submitted written testimony before the Board of Education requesting a Chin Liaison position for the FY2020 Operating Budget. On April 25, 2019, CIANUSA Board Chairman Rev. Tim Siemens testified before the Board of Education again. We have been meeting with the former Council Chair, other Council members and staff including your staff explaining our need. We are hopeful, but the Council has not yet considered our request. This evening at 6:30pm, Board Chairman Rev. Tim Siemens will testify before you to request your consideration this liaison position at HCPSS.

Here are the reasons why we need the Liaison position at HCPSS.

1. The education system and the culture in Burma is different than here in Howard County.
2. Most of the Chin parents did not complete high school level in Burma
3. Most of the Chin parents are not fluent in English.
4. Many Chin students received free and reduced meal services (FARMS).
5. Both parents are working and doing a pass off between one working day shift while the other parent works night shift.
6. We face challenges especially recently with distance learning due to COVID-19.

There is one Chin liaison whose positive impact demonstrates the importance of this work. However, she cannot serve over 400 students and families by herself. We understand that there may be other immigrant communities within Howard County who also would like a liaison position. While respecting the many challenges facing other communities, we believe that our need for a liaison for our Chin refugee community is very important.

I respectfully make this request for your consideration. Thank you.

Yours truly,


Zo Tum Hmung



Good evening, Chair Jung and County Council members. My name is Linda Leslie and I am a resident of Columbia. I would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the Wilde Lake High School Parent Teacher Student Association in support of the FY 2021 education operating budget.

The Wilde Lake PTSA is dedicated to helping every student at the Lake reach their fullest potential. At Wilde Lake we take that charge very seriously. As a community, we recognize that there are many paths to success and we are dedicated to supporting all of them. We are working hard to have every Wilde Lake graduate find their path after high school, and we are hoping that at some point this year our current Seniors will walk off the stage at Merriweather with an acceptance letter for college or an apprenticeship, an offer for a well-paying job, or enlistment in the military. Clearly, strong academic and non-academic programming is necessary to achieve these goals.

Here in Howard County, the community rightfully places a strong emphasis on academic programs and at Wilde Lake, we benefit from strong GT and AP classes. All of our students, both diploma-bound and non-diploma bound, have an academic path and program while in high school. However, at the Lake we also recognize that a traditional, four-year degree is not the only post-secondary path for every child and that academic access challenges still exist for many across our county. This is where non-academic programming plays a critical role.

Unfortunately, there is a perception by some in Howard County that certain groups don't value education as much as others. At Wilde Lake we know, however, that a good education is important to all our families, regardless of race, national origin, or socio-economic status. The issue we see is that some families don't fully understand how to access resources to help their kids get what they need to succeed educationally. These families need interventions like the

Black Student Achievement Program, our Hispanic liaison, and our school-based health and mental health staff to help access resources in a way that isn't judging them.

We are proud of the support we are able to provide students who need it, and we are working to expand that support. Wilde Lake staff and families have been at the forefront of efforts like Columbia Community Care to help ensure families have food during the COVID-19 crisis. Beyond today's crisis, we have seen firsthand the benefits of the BSAP, an effective Hispanic liaison resource, and school-based health, mental health, and social work resources. For example, Wilde Lake is one of 30 schools benefitting from the mental health pilot program currently in progress through the partnership of HCPSS and the Horizon Foundation. While some in Howard County are calling these programs unproven, we know they are making a difference in the lives of our kids every day. It is essential that programs such as these be protected.

In tight budget times, the loud voices in the room get even louder advocating for the programs and policies that benefit their families and schools. We appreciate that many of those testifying are simply community members concerned about the welfare of their children and neighborhoods, but we want to help ensure that the loudest voices in the room don't drown out the needs of your neediest constituents.

The reality of our current situation is that the needs of the student population have changed significantly since our high schoolers started their education journey. Special education needs have skyrocketed and poverty rates have soared – even here in Howard County. And while our education budget has increased, we are still woefully understaffed in areas like special education and health and mental health services. Clearly, we need to re-examine our assumptions about how school funding should work and what our budgeting priorities be.

The Howard County Public School System's Strategic Call to Action defines Equity as "providing the access, opportunities and supports needed to help students, families and staff reach their full potential by removing barriers to success that individuals face. It does not mean equal or giving everyone the same thing."

The Wilde Lake High School PTSA believes that an equity lens must be applied to the County's decision making process in budgeting. Budgeting with an equity lens will help us address educational disparities across socio-economic, racial, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, and religious groups.

What do we want you to do? We ask that you support a budget where each student receives the support they need to reach their full potential, and where each student, regardless of their school assignment, is treated equitably. We want you to work day and night as advocates for our children, putting them – all of them - as your first priority. Most of all, we are asking you to provide strong leadership in budgeting for the solutions we need without compromising our principles to the demands of special interests.

We are extremely concerned that the budget presented by the County Executive will require severe cuts to critical services for our neediest students, including increases in class size and reduction or cancellation of special programs like the mental health pilot. We urge you to reconsider the funding request and increase it if possible. Our PTSA recognizes that finding the money to support the education budget will not be easy, especially in these times, but if we are truly a community that places education above all else, we will find a way to meet this challenge. Let us show our kids that we have the courage to rise above the divisiveness that is currently affecting every aspect of our lives, and fulfill the promise of educational equity in Howard County.

Thank you.

Linda Leslie

Wilde Lake High School Parent Teach Student Association

2019-2020 President