

Sayers, Margery

From: Ellen Sowry <ellenbsowry@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 9, 2021 5:39 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: School Funding

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Dear County Council Members-

Thank you very much for taking the time to read my testimony. I have been a resident of Howard County for 12 years and have closely followed different aspects of local government throughout that time. I recognize what challenging positions you have and thank each of you for your service!

Today I am writing to request that you make fully funding the HCPSS budget a priority in this county. I have 3 children in the HCPSS, one in elementary, one in middle, and one in high school. I have been an active member of the PTA/PTSA at their various schools for several years, serving as the President at Dayton Oaks Elementary for the prior 2 years and currently serving as a PTACHC delegate for both Dayton Oaks PTA and Glenelg High School's PTSA. Every year, I have paid close attention to the budget process and watched as the Superintendent and then Board of Education make their requests, and the County Executive provide a budget that falls short of what was requested. Then the County Council is left to make adjustments. Ultimately the Board of Education is forced to cut funding to programs, increase class sizes, and make other adjustments to what is needed to properly fund the school system. It is incredibly frustrating as a parent to see this happen year after year. I know that we are still facing a worldwide pandemic that has taken a toll on so many and caused so much need. I also recognize that there are many competing needs when it comes to the county budget. However, I strongly believe that our children, and in turn our educators, deserve better! Please find ways to fully fund the HCPSS budget by increasing revenue and making sure that the policies that you put in place allow for enough resources for the growing number of students who come to our county for a stellar education.

Thank you for your time-

Ellen Sowry
5008 Green Bridge Rd
Dayton, MD

May 10, 2021
Funding Allocated to HCPSS:
Operating Budget

Howard County Council,

Good morning, my name is Kathy Howell, and I am an HCPSS parent, stakeholder, and Howard County resident. Thank you for allowing me to speak. I am here to speak in opposition to the proposed County Budget, because of its inadequate funding of Howard County Public Schools.

I am here to speak against the budget and to offer a cautionary tale. The trends that I see in Howard County are quite concerning, especially when it comes to school funding. I am quite confused about how we expect people to continue to move here with underfunded and overburdened schools. Many people are here for the schools and would not have chosen to move here otherwise. People pay quite a bit of money to purchase and rent here, so their children can attend these schools. How it is then that leaders seem to be doing so much to squander it all?

I am not from Howard County, and I know what other school systems and communities are like. Why do you think I am living here now? I see a slow moving train wreck. I see it coming and the people with the ability to stop it aren't.

I see a school district that is already struggling to do more with even less. How does that work? How do you shoe string a school budget? Underfunded schools do not serve many of their most vulnerable students, and that means there is less for all students. Less money, less staff, and the county loses its bragging rights. How do you attract the most talented teachers while refusing to give them the tools to teach our students? How do you tell teachers to do more with less?

You want to speak about these excellent schools, but the county wants to underfund them, while prioritizing developers, during a period of time when teachers are quitting or retiring early, because they are demoralized. What is the insensitive which will keep teachers here under these conditions? They can earn more elsewhere. We have teachers retiring early and quitting because they are demoralized due to the ill treatment they have received. We were already short of teachers and counselors. We expect to have more students with emotional and mental health needs after this pandemic. How can they receive the help they need with no money to pay for it?

There is a word that gets thrown about quite a bit here, and its equity. True equity is for everyone. I cannot for the life of me understand how we are so loud about that, but we undermine it every step of the way. I cannot understand how any equity can take place when we cannot serve the needs of our students, our gifted learners, our minority learners, our eager learners, our learners with disabilities and those with none. Equity is just an empty word when you do not back it up with action.

Do the right thing by investing in the schools. Please stop underfunding and undermining the thing this county says it values most.

Thank you.
Kathy Howell
8389 Old Frederick Rd.

Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

Sayers, Margery

From: heather.urner@yahoo.com
Sent: Monday, May 10, 2021 12:22 AM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Budget Work Session Tesyimony
Attachments: Figure shifts.pdf; Changes to focus on.pdf

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Good Evening All,

My name is Heather Urner, I am a County Resident and Public School Parent. My address is 10332 Hickory Ridge Rd Apt 738 Columbia MD 21044. I am writing testimony for the morning work session occurring on Monday May 10th at approximately 9:30 am. By this day the County Executive, Mr. Calvin Ball, will have given you all the outlined budget. I urge you all to make changes. In this stage of the budget it is the County Council whom all have the power to vote to increase the budget that was presented to them, and I say do so. I say relocate all monies planning for any SRO body camera program to go into the HCPSS Operating budget. As it stands now our public school will be dealing with a negative 28.9 million difference in Operating Expenditures. In that, I also encourage you all to look to fund HCPSS beyond the MOE. We need to not think of any soundbite headlines but we need to know that the locals in Howard County know what the math actual looks like with what gets approved.

The old MOE looks like so much was done to fund schools at 20.1M above MOE, but when you adjust figures the math only shows 2.5M. Howard County parents know and have the data where, since FY 2015 (5.23%) the gigantic slide in the percentage of County Funding per Pupil caused a massive gap, from its lowest dip in FY 2018 of 0.26% to its hardly worth bragging about climb to 0.41% in FY 21 from 1.20% in FY 20. We are a county that brags about the achievement of its students and yet we don't listen to the parents that seek answers to cuts from BOE that knowingly happen because the County Council doesn't take the action to say NO to MOE. Howard County parents are well aware that our children need a School budget beyond the MOE. We can not continue to cut our school budget and think that parents' can't see the timeline of how the budget works. BOE can not add to the budget once they've received it, they can only cut. This isn't any excuse, this is the action they have available to make to given budget work.

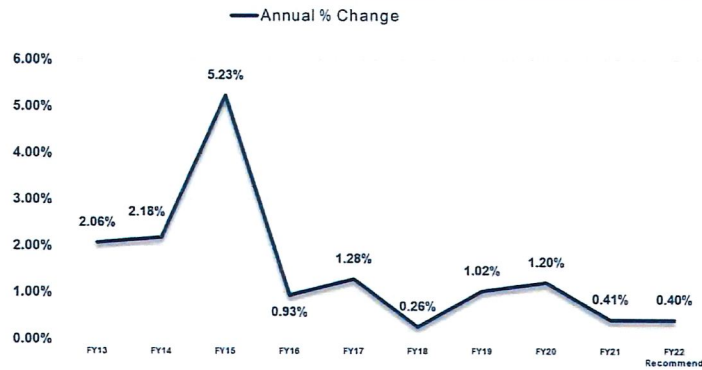
We need the County in all of its levels to say and show that MOE is not enough. How can we continue to rest on something that maintenance, when our education system is not maintaining. Is overcrowding maintaining, is uneven opportunity in programs throughout each of the schools maintaining, is sharing a school nurse maintaining, are outdated APFO equations maintaining? HCPSS parents know our schools NEED and DESERVE MORE. In the steps of the budget it is now in YOUR HANDS to adjust what you see in front of you and SAY HCPSS NEEDS AND DESERVES MORE. Show the Howard County Families that you know we are watching, we are analyzing, and that we are remembering who voted on or refused to take a stance on fully funding OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM.

Let your actions bring HCPSS the funds they need to give our students the pathway to a more fruitful education. Let your actions show that we are the County that others' look towards in knowing that investing in education brings so many rewards. We know education is key and is important, show us you know this by fully funding the schools and adjusting the budget to give the BOE that to give to our students and teachers and staff.

Thank you for you time,

Heather Urner

County Funding per Pupil- Yearly Change



Enrollment



FY 2022 Budget Considerations

FY22 Expenditure Increases

Item	FY22 Cost	Item	FY22 Cost	Item	FY22 Cost
• One-time Health Fund deficit elimination	\$ 18,690,886	• Increase funding for Workers Compensation Fund	\$ 462,425	• Board of Education in-house 1.0 Legal Counsel	\$ 75,419
• Attracting and Retaining High-Quality Teachers and Staff	\$ 6,553,954	• Increase in MABE insurance premiums	\$ 379,282	• Addition of a 1.0 Nurse	\$ 69,972
• Digital Education Center (DEC)	\$ 6,229,432	• Shift of 2.2 Grant funded position to the Operating Fund	\$ 274,016	• Sustaining 1.0 Social Worker from Horizon Foundation grant	\$ 50,000
• Funding Commitments for Special Education New Enrollment and Existing Service Levels	\$ 5,357,451	• Increase funding for County water/sewage maintenance fee	\$ 211,852	• Benefit Costs for Nurse, Grant shifted positions & Social Worker	\$ 43,338
• Funding Commitments for General Education New Enrollment	\$ 4,030,577	• Building Security Commitments	\$ 150,000	• Student Transportation routing software	\$ 37,022
• Meeting Financial Commitments to Health Insurance	\$ 3,693,285	• Increase to life insurance	\$ 142,000	• Benefit Costs for New Legal Counsel	\$ 24,581
• Enhanced Supports for Students and SRO Alternative	\$ 3,438,339	• Other non-enrollment increases	\$ 200,551	• Increase for Risk Management contracted services	\$ 17,743
• Sustaining Technology Infrastructure and Cybersecurity Safeguards	\$ 3,279,433	• High School Athletics HUDL Streaming Service	\$ 100,000	• Increase unemployment claims	\$ 10,000
• Enhanced Efforts in Reading Instruction and Dyslexia Training	\$ 896,272	• Transfer Lobby Guard maintenance from Technology Fund	\$ 77,500		



Comparison to Prior-Year Funding

	FY 2021 Approved	County Executive Recommended	Difference
Revenues			
County Operating	\$620.3M	\$622.8M	\$ 2.5M
County One-Time	-	\$10.0M	\$10.0M
State	\$282.7M	\$282.5M	\$(0.2)M
Other	\$7.7M	\$7.4M	\$(0.4)M
Fund Balance	\$8.0M	-	\$(8.0)M
TOTAL	\$918.7M	\$922.6M	\$4.0M
Expenditures			
Operating	\$918.7M	\$912.6M	\$(6.0)M
Health Deficit One-Time	-	\$10.0M	\$10.0M
TOTAL	\$918.7M	\$922.6M	\$4.0M

Due to rounding, numbers may not sum.



Understanding Maintenance of Effort

- **Maintenance of Effort (MOE)**
 - State law requires local governments to maintain the per pupil funding at least at the same amount as the prior year
 - The MOE must be funded by the local government
- **Calculation of Required MOE for the Budget (two step process)**
 - First, determine the per pupil funding amount that must be maintained by taking the current year county funding (excluding any one-time) divided by the prior school year official enrollment (the year prior to the funding year)
 - Second, multiply the per pupil funding amount by the greater of the prior year **official enrollment** or the 3-year average official enrollment, excluding Sept 2020 enrollment

On April 9, 2021, HB 1372, the Kirwan "Fix Bill" changed the **official enrollment** calculation for MOE. Before the change, prior year enrollment was used.

The BOE Requested Budget was based on the old calculation and assumed a hold-harmless action by Legislature.



5

FY 2022 Maintenance of Effort

Old MOE Calculation- Sept 2020 enrollment										
FY21 Funding	/	Sept 2019 Enrollment	=	Per Pupil Base	*	Sept 20 Enrollment	=	FY22 MOE	CE FY22 Recomm.	Above MOE
\$620.3M ¹	/	57,386	=	\$10,809	*	55,755	=	\$602.7M	\$622.8M	\$20.1M

New MOE Calculation- HB1372										
FY21 Funding	/	Sept 2019 Enrollment	=	Per Pupil Base	*	Greater= Sept 19 Enrollment	=	FY22 MOE	CE FY22 Recomm.	Above MOE
\$620.3M ¹	/	57,386	=	\$10,809	*	57,386	=	\$620.3M	\$622.8M	\$2.5M

3-Yr Avg= 56,387

Good Morning Council Chair Walsh and Council Members,

My name is Benjamin Schmitt and I'm the Vice President of the Howard County Education Association. This morning I'm speaking on behalf of over 6,000 educators in the Howard County Public School System.

This year, our members have redesigned teaching, engaging students we only know as avatars on screens, and supporting them through this pandemic. Employees are working 10-14 hour days, weekends, holidays, enduring sleepless nights, stress, fatigue, and trying to take care of their own families too. Nationally, teaching has always been an undervalued and under supported profession. However, Howard County prides itself on its public schools. People move here for children to attend our schools, and elected officials always tout how much they care. We're repeatedly told that education is a priority, but year after year not given the funds to meet the rising demands our students bring to school each day.

And, now, we pivoted once again, teaching concurrently, which is terribly difficult. Imagine, splitting your attention between 10-20 students on a separate monitor in a Google Meet, while another ten are in front of you in the classroom. You don't have the ability, nor all equipment, to use an LCD projector, document camera, laptop, and an additional monitor for the Meet, all at the same time. So, you make due, and the students in front of you are still glued to their own screens in order to access the lesson and interact with peers. Imagine having to split reading groups in a way that decreases screen time, while going against best practices. Or having to modify curricula on a daily basis, as it wasn't already sufficiently prepared for this situation, trying not to shortchange students at home or in-person. And in between your own classes, you have to sub for educators because there aren't enough substitutes. These are just some examples of what our educators experience every day in our new normal.

Now, after perhaps the hardest year for educators and students over the last three decades, we've been shown once again, just how little we are appreciated, and how little our work is valued by our Board of Education and our County Executive. This past year, in the doom and gloom presented about the budget, County employees received step and two percent, but our agreement was broken. We were told, yet again, there wasn't enough money in the County budget to support the negotiated contract. Alas, revenues still increased by tens of millions. Currently, houses are selling at record prices, yet, all the county could see fit to give the school system was an additional \$2.5M in reoccurring funds.

Last year, in addition to underfunding our contract, we needed 300 educators to adequately cover our special education students, but could only hire 107 with the funds allocated. The amount we owe in compensable services keeps growing because of this continued underfunding. Additionally, we were unable to add new counselors, school psychologists, and social workers to assist the growing mental health needs of our students.

This is unacceptable, just as it is unacceptable that as the County's revenues increase, the percentage the school system receives decreases. We're tired of seeing historic fund balances

from ultra conservative projections. In 2019, we were allocated 53% of the budget. This coming year we are slated to receive 50% (the lowest since 2012 when we received 56%). The additional 3% would allow HCPSS to have \$35M more than allocated. And, you only have until July of 2024 to raise educator salary scales by 10% under the new Blueprint Legislation. Unlike Howard, surrounding counties are making historic investments in schools right now!

I've taught in the county for 23 years, and can't think of a time that we haven't fought for crumbs from the budget, especially over the last 10-12 years. Going through this process yearly, to feel so unappreciated, to listen to so much doublespeak, is sorrowful, stress-inducing, and demoralizing for all of our educators. It doesn't help motivate others to go into the profession, or attract and retain current employees.

The County is not alone in their disrespect to education and educators. Our own Board of Education refuses to settle negotiations. Instead, they want to get more money from you and the ability to spend it as they see fit. We're repeatedly asked by the school system to take on a larger portion of our health care costs which would leave educators actually having less disposable income due to zero to minimal salary increases.

Educators have sacrificed year after year for our students and families. The County and the BoE have a duty to fight for the resources that our children need. Instead, we see childish finger pointing. This leaves educators underpaid, our schools short staffed, and leaves students without the services and resources they so desperately need. Actions speak more loudly than words. Do the hard work. Do what is necessary. Fund the school system. Fund our contracts. Fund special education and the wrap around services our students need. Make Howard County and its school system the example to follow, rather than leaving it falling further behind.