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howardcc.edu

You Can Get There From Here.

Testimony of Christopher Marasco

Chair, Howard Community College Board of Trustees
County Council Budget Hearing
April 24, 2023

Good evening, my name is Chris Marasco, and I currently serve as the chair of the Howard Community College board of trustees.

My fellow trustees and I are grateful for your support last fiscal year. As you know, HCC must have consistent, annual support to ensure the retention of dedicated employees who believe in the college's mission of providing pathways to success and to educate our amazing students who drive our purpose.

- The County Executive's increase of 5.05% will enable the college to provide a much-needed salary increase to employees.
- It also will add eight new operating budget positions in critical student-facing and student-impacting areas.
- The funding will also help cover the skyrocketing costs for utilities and contracts as a result of inflation. These increased costs have nothing to do with the college or its operations, rather these are costs incurred by our service providers and passed on down to the college.

Your support for fiscal year 2024 will engage and retain employees who deserve to be compensated for their dedication and talent. Your support will help the college weather the high cost of inflation. And finally, your support will keep our offices staffed with employees who are essential to serving students.

Thank you for your time tonight. I look forward to your continued partnership and investment in Howard Community College to help us achieve our mission of providing pathways to success for every student and employee.

Thank you.



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Testimony by Aisha Rivers

Monday, April 24, 2023

Budget Hearing Testimony

Good evening, Chair Rigby and Councilmembers. My name is Aisha Rivers and I serve as the Director of Student Life at Howard Community College. I am also an Ellicott City homeowner and mother to a Howard County Public School System student. All of this means that I'm establishing roots here, this is my community, and I would like to share my thoughts on why your support of Howard Community College's operating budget is crucial.

When I explain to people that I work in student life, their usual response is "oh, you're the fun office!" While it is true that my team and I create fun experiences for our students, our work also centers on empowering students, building connections, and supporting student wellness. We serve students who have full lives, they often need immediate assistance, someone to listen, offer support, and point them in the direction of resources and opportunities that will ensure their success. In one way or another, we all do this type of work across the college. The experience can be emotionally and mentally draining, but we are driven to support students in this way.

My colleagues and I love our work, and we make sure our students, one another, and the institution are sound and well. However, we need greater opportunities to do that for ourselves and our families. One of the most fruitful ways to do that is to advocate for stronger salaries that account for the cost of living, and not just living to survive, but living to thrive.

I recently went to the store to buy diapers for my two-year-old and was yet again sticker shocked by the steady increase in their price. I mean even the price of eggs causes pause. Inflation is concerning and in that moment, I made a conscious decision to double down on potty training. I would like to not have to make decisions between the food my family eats, potty training out of fear of spending too much money, and deciding whether or not I have the funds for my 6 year old to participate in summer activities that would help her grow and evolve. I say this with the understanding that some of my colleagues have to make decisions that are much more life-altering than school activities or potty training.

The funding support that you provided last year was amazing. I know some colleagues who made the decision to stay at HCC because that increase made them feel seen, heard, and valued for their dedication to students. I urge you to keep me and other employees in mind as you consider the HCC operating budget. A salary increase would allow us to continue pouring ourselves into Howard Community College, our students, ourselves, our families, and by critical extension, Howard County. Thank you.



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Testimony by Julie Jones

Monday, April 24, 2023

Good evening, Chair Rigby, and Councilmembers. My name is Julie Jones. I am a 30-year resident of Howard County and have worked at Howard Community College for over 25 years. I am also an alumna, class of 2001. I would like to share my thoughts on what HCC means to me and why your support of our operating budget is crucial.

When I first stepped foot on campus in 1997, I did not know what I wanted to do for a career, and I was also living with the ghosts of being an honors student in high school, but not doing well in my first attempt at college at UMBC. I enrolled at HCC to figure things out. In the beginning, I did ok, not great, just ok. But my HCC instructors reached out to me and connected me with the support resources I needed to be successful.

While I was a student, I was hired to work in the computer lab in the Information Technology department. This gave me the opportunity to give back to the school that had given me and my family so much. I loved the job so much, I encouraged my mom, my two younger sisters and my brother to apply to work there when they enrolled at HCC as students. Four of the five of us have had long careers at HCC. We are here to give back to the students and to help them be successful in their chosen careers.

I have always appreciated the support the county has given HCC. But we, the employees of HCC, have also experienced some challenging economic times. Over the past few years, the cost of living has skyrocketed. I know many employees who cannot afford to live in Howard County anymore. I know other employees who work additional jobs to make ends meet. I have seen friends leave HCC for higher-paying jobs in the private sector. While I have decided to stay at HCC, sometimes I am living paycheck to paycheck and must make tough decisions around bills, food and gas.

I urge you to consider my story and the countless other HCC success stories when you are reviewing our operating budget. A salary increase will help us retain our great employees and will help us attract the high-quality employees needed to help us continue our success. Thank you.



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Testimony by Andrew Detwiler

Monday, April 24, 2023

Good evening Chair Rigby and Councilmembers,

My name is Andrew Detwiler. I work in the facilities department at Howard Community College, where I help keep the campus safe by making sure all doors secure properly, security cameras are functioning, and the fire alarm operates when it's supposed to.

I have been at HCC for nine years. I drive an hour each day to and from work because I love my job and I love HCC. That said, with the cost of living and inflation alone, it makes it more challenging each month to make the budget work for me and my family. I fill my tank twice every week and that expense alone has doubled due to inflation. I would like to move closer to HCC, but as you all may know, the housing market is also astronomical. I have always been a grateful person for whatever I receive and don't usually ask for much, However I come tonight to ask for your support of our operating budget.

There are so many great employees at HCC, who enjoy our jobs and are in the same or worse situation as me. If you ever come to HCC and look around at our campus, you will see employees who take pride in our campus. Their passion radiates. If I pass you in the hall or the quad, I'll catch you with a "good morning" or a "hello," no matter who you are.

I can sit here all night and tell you stories of all the thousand reasons why we need this money, but I know I only get three minutes. I want you to think about if your son or daughter went to HCC, would you want an unhappy employee surrounding and teaching your kids, or a happy, well-qualified, caring, and fairly-paid employee with your children?

When you come to HCC, you will find passionate, caring and qualified employees. We just ask for your funding to provide employees with the important cost-of-living adjustment and merit pay . So please consider us and the students' futures as you make your decisions.

Thank you. I look forward to your support.



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Testimony – Dr. Daria J. Willis

President, Howard Community College
County Council Budget Hearing
April 24, 2023

5 minutes – Representing Organization

Good evening, Chair Rigby, Vice Chair Jung, and Councilmembers. I am Dr. Daria Willis, president of Howard Community College.

Thank you for this time to speak before you about the Howard Community College operating budget. I appreciate your ongoing support of the college and look forward to equally strong support for the fiscal year 2024.

I want to recognize members from the Board of Trustees, the Educational Foundation, faculty, staff, students, family, friends, community and business leaders who are in attendance tonight to support our college.

They believe wholeheartedly in our mission of providing pathways to success, and they spend countless hours doing what is needed to assist students from enrollment to graduation.

I also want to thank the County Executive for providing historic increases to the College's budget last year and the proposed increase for this year. We appreciate his ability to understand the work done by over 2,000 employees in service to over 23,000 students who call HCC home.

But there is much more that can be done to ensure our faculty and staff can live, work, and thrive in Howard County, the third most affluent county in the nation.

- Thanks to your investment last year, the college provided salary increases at 7%, which was the first such increase at the college in over 10 years.
- Since fiscal year 2012, our salary increases typically ranged from one to just above four percent. And during this time, there were two years with delayed implementation.

- And in fiscal year 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was no salary increase.

Over the years, the college had been focused entirely on merit pay. But this past year, we took time to examine our compensation structure. We surveyed and talked with employees about a model that was meaningful to them, and one that valued their work.

We received overwhelming feedback that our faculty and staff needed to move to a cost-of-living adjustment with a smaller merit payment for equity considerations and in a response to inflation.

Effective in fiscal year 2024, the college will transition to a new compensation structure, and our operating budget that you will consider was built on this principle.

The college requested a 10% operating budget increase, and again, I appreciate the County Executive recognized our employees' needs and proposed a 5.05% increase.

- With this funding, the college will be able to provide budgeted faculty and staff with a 6.5% cost-of-living adjustment, with an additional 1% for merit.
- Our adjunct faculty pay rates would also increase by 12.5% over last fall, ensuring their salaries remain competitive.

The budget also includes 8 new positions, including providing a paid position for our Fueling Dragons program and a position for a counselor.

If you are not familiar with Fueling Dragons, this is essentially our food pantry, where students receive nutritious foods and recipes to meet their basic needs. For the past several years, this program has not had stable support through a full-time budgeted position, and this budget proposal will make this vision a reality.

We will also hire a counselor to support the behavioral health challenges experienced by so many among us today, with particular sensitivity for students.

Allow me a moment to illustrate why this is important.

In December of 2022 I received the call that no college president wants to answer. A former student over the holidays drove to the top floor of the parking garage with a demonstrated intention to take

their own life. Thankfully, our security team saw the activity on the camera and immediately dispatched someone to the scene. The officer pulled the individual from ledge as they were intending to jump. If you thought we were out of the woods, a similar situation occurred just a few weeks ago.

I ask you to not reduce our budget.

If you reduce the proposed historic increase of 5.05% even further, it will carry significant financial and human costs that cannot be fully illustrated by the examples I have shared with you today.

If you are thinking that community colleges received additional funding from the state this year, so that should be enough, let me remind you, it took 20 years for community colleges to receive full funding per state statute.

In addition to the staff members who pulled the student to safety, we have other staff who give their financial resources to help others.

Ivy is one of our valued facilities staff members. She is originally from Ghana, and spends the better part of the year, seeking donations from employees at the college for household goods, kitchenware, office and school supplies, and clothes. She just returned from a trip, where she paid over \$4,000 in shipping fees to send hundreds of items from her colleagues to over 200 people in her hometown. That is \$4,000 of her personal money.

There is also Favour who works with our Special Populations. As a child, her father did not allow her to receive a formal education, because she is a girl. Her male siblings were educated and she was not. Thanks to her grandmother, who gave all that she had to pay for Favour's education, and hopefully by this summer, Favour will earn her PhD after defending her dissertation.

But due to her lived experiences, Favour supports the education of young girls in several African countries who are denied the opportunity as previously stated. She does this with her resources and due to her convictions of the power of an education, especially for women.

There is also Jimmy from advising who has served HCC for several years. I met Jimmy walking down the hall one day, and for the record, I have never seen Jimmy walking alone, as he is always surrounded by students. They trust him. They love him, and they frequently seek his advisement in terms of their future, and he never turns them away.

With your support, we can keep talented employees like Ivy, Favour, and Jimmy at HCC. With only 5 minutes to share, there are countless names of folks behind me who have given all their time and resources for our students, and people across the world.

Both our students and employees deserve the very best, and this operating budget proposal achieves that goal!

Let's not forget we still need that workforce center, for obvious reasons stated last week.

Thank you for your time and support.

My name is Corinne Happel from Ellicott City, MD. I am against the currently submitted education budget because it does not adequately fund Howard County needs for school buses.

I am a concerned mother of five children ages 8 and under and am personally affected by the cancellations. I'm also speaking out as a board-certified pediatrician.

Over one third of school bus cuts affect elementary school students using estimates given by Transportation Director Brian Nevin.

School bus cancellations for elementary school students can affect parent's ability to work. In Maryland, leaving a child under the age of 8 unattended is considered neglect. Thus, if a young elementary school child needs to walk 1 and a quarter mile to get to school and does not have access to a private vehicle, a caregiver must walk 1 1/4 miles to go to school, 1 1/4 miles to come back home, 1 1/4 miles to go back to school to pick up the child, and finally 1 1/4 miles to bring the child home from school. In total, many elementary school parents/caregivers in the new non-transportation areas would have to walk close to 5 miles if not more just to supervise their child going to and from school.

As we think about equity and the young children who have fallen behind during the pandemic (the children with less were more likely to miss crucial educational milestones), it is concerning that we will expect their caregivers to walk close to five miles roundtrip daily to supervise them going back and forth to the school in the morning and afternoon. These parents and caregivers need time to spend working on skills like reading with their children, reviewing basic math facts, or earning valuable income to pay for surging grocery bills, rent/property tax, and childcare in Howard County. **These children should not be tired, exhausted, cold, or wet when they arrive at school because they did not have access to a private vehicle when it was stormy, wet, or cold.**

Many parents of these same elementary school children are the parents who dealt with keeping one or more of their children home during the pandemic when in person instruction shut down in schools for over a year. With inflation surging, families need to feel even more secure in the basic resources that a community provides like safe transportation to school. Suddenly losing school bus service while families are already struggling to pay for basic needs will be a huge burden.

For families who can afford it, driving kids to school from new further walk zones is not great for Howard County either. Our elementary school's drop off and pick up zones are already flooded with cars that decrease visibility and safety of walkers. An excerpt from an e-mail sent to parents from a local elementary school:

Volume of Traffic in the Parking Lot

+ As of today, we are averaging **120 cars** driving through the lot at arrival, many arriving at or after 8:40 AM.

This is a lot of traffic for staff to manage safely in a fourteen-minute arrival period.

[+ Arrival **begins** at 8:30 AM and should be **concluded** by 8:44 AM for car riders and walkers.

+ If you drive your child to school, **please arrive to school between 8:30 and 8:40 AM.**

+ **If you receive bus service to your address, PLEASE put your child on the assigned bus.**

The children who are losing school bus service are the ones who are further distances away than the children in current walk zones who are choosing to be driven to school. **As this non-service area expands outward, the majority of children who are losing service WILL be the ones who are driven in private vehicles if they can afford it.** As a result, current car lines in congested school parking lots will continue to expand as the visibility of walking school children and their safety decreases.

We need to find a way to fund a reversal of this decision to cancel school buses. Thank you!

In addition to having children walking or being driven in private vehicles from further distances to schools in Howard County, children may have to walk or drive significantly increased distances to their school bus stops. **While previously the maximum allowable distance from home to a bus stop was half a mile, bus stops for elementary school students can now be up to 1.0 mile away, bus stops for middle school students can be 1.5 miles away, and bus stops for high schoolers can be 2.0 miles away.** This has not been advertised to parents. In discussions with many, most do not seem aware. Bus stops and routes are not released until August. Just as parents & caregivers were shocked to see announcements that their school bus was canceled, others will be shocked to see that they too can be highly affected by transportation policy 5200 changes when they see in August that their school bus stop is a mile or more away from their home. Concerns about increased cars on Howard County roads, equity, and safety as they relate to bus cancellations are compounded by the change in bus stop distances from homes.



Advocate For
Howard County
Public Schools

Immersion Program

By 2025

DC, Maryland, Virginia Counties

- [Montgomery County](#) offers Chinese, French, and Spanish elementary and middle school immersion programs
- [Prince George's County](#) offers Chinese and Spanish immersion programs K-9 and French K-12
- [Washington, DC](#) - There are 27 immersion programs in public and charter schools (Spanish, Chinese, French, Hebrew)
- [Fairfax County](#) offers French, German, Japanese, Korean and Spanish immersion programs for elementary school and German, Korean, Japanese and Spanish immersion programs for middle schools
- [Alexandria](#) and [Arlington](#) offers a Spanish immersion program K-8
- [Charles County](#) and [Loudoun County](#) will launch their first immersion program (Spanish), in the Fall of 2023 and 2024 respectively



Does it cost more to implement?

“**Not necessarily.** However, many successful programs have found that **some extra funding** is necessary to provide staff development and purchase materials in the target language, especially for library and research materials.”

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/faq.asp>

“Overall, this study highlights that DLI [dual language immersion] programs in [Portland Public Schools] are **cost-effective** and result in positive academic gains for students. Specifically, the authors note that their findings suggest that it is possible to scale the positive academic impacts of DLI program participation ‘**with modest investments** at the central office level, concentrated on supporting high-quality dual language instruction through professional development and curriculum support.’”

<https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/new-study-examines-costs-dual-language-immersion-programs/>

“In their book Dual Language Education for a Transformed World Thomas and Collier state ‘When comparing Dual Language (DL) classrooms to [...] mainstream English classrooms [... c]ost for DL are less than for ESL-only because DL is a mainstream (not a separate remedial) program that is taught through two (rather than one) languages. Some extra cost may be needed for second language materials, but no additional classroom teachers are needed [...]’

In comparison with FLES programs (Foreign Language in Elementary School), **dual language immersion programs are less expensive, more impactful** in terms of achievement and results on the District’s future workforce.”

<https://dcimmersion.org/cost/>

Yes, immersion programs generally cost more than having no language program. However, they may cost less than ESL and FLES programs while having a bigger impact.

How Can We Start?

- ❖ Hire multilingual teachers as current teachers retire
- ❖ Seek multilingual teachers for the new elementary schools opening up in 2027 and 2031
- ❖ Find out if we can leverage the Skilled Immigrant Program at Howard Community College
- ❖ Reach out to neighboring counties for best practices and lessons learned
- ❖ Involve Howard County citizens and committees for feedback and ideas

I KNOW THAT WE CAN DO IT IF WE ALL WORK TOGETHER!!!

April 24th, 2023

Howard County Council Budget Testimony regarding school bussing

Good evening, Council members,

I am here tonight to advocate for the reinstatement of bussing to Centennial Lane Elementary School (CLES) from the Chateau Ridgelake community. I recommend rejecting the budget as proposed and ask the County Council to send it back to the Board of Education so that it specifically contains additional funds to be directed towards school buses for our elementary school aged children.

The elimination of bussing and expansion of the 'walker' designation will now leave many elementary school aged families in a difficult situation. The new walking routes for myself and others in the neighborhood can take over 25 minutes each way. This time estimate assumes a walker at an adult speed, and does not consider child walking speed, weather impact or encumbrances such as book bags, athletic bags, instruments or all of the above. I know of very few individuals who simply can afford to take nearly 2hrs out of the standard working day to walk kids to school. Likewise, CLES already encourages more bus riders, as the drop-off and pickup lines are long, chaotic and unsafe due to the poor layout and design of the school's driving lanes.

Speaking of unsafe, many of the Chateau Ridgelake community members would be walking the shortest distance to school – a route that takes them along a dangerous S-curve in a road that in the past has been deemed unsafe for CLES walkers which then afforded the neighborhood safe bussing of young kids. The last thing anyone wants is a child hit by a vehicle when the county could have found a solution.

This issue has many implications:

- Families may be forced to pay for some form of childcare or have a loss of income to account for these changes.
- These additional costs of time and money fall hardest on those can least afford them, representing an unequitable impact on the community.
- Since walking is not actually feasible for many, additional vehicles will be on the roads for drop off and pickup.
 - Additional cars increase the risk for those who *do* walk or bike
 - Additional cars increase the county's carbon footprint.

I respectfully request that the county re-evaluate the budget and identify

resources to resolve this issue. Reinstating bussing is the most direct, complete and elegant solution to the problems stated. However, additional funding for schools dedicated to a significant expansion of child drop-off and pickup times could represent a secondary, partial solution to alleviate some, but not all, of these pressures. I leave it to the county to decide if finding school staff to work longer hours or hiring additional bus drivers is the right solution for Howard County.

This issue is not just one that impacts CLES, but is county-wide, and deserves the county's attention. A budget that does not address this problem for our schools should not pass, and should be amended to ensure safe access and transportation for all Howard County kids to get to school.

Thank you for your time.

Greg Bissonette
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