
From: Caroline Walker <Caroline_Walker@hcpss.org>
Sent: Friday, January 19, 2024 5:05 PM
To: Matthew Molyett
Cc: Bill Barnes; superintendent@hcpss.org; BoE Email; CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin
Subject: [External] Request for Budgetary Support to Expand LGBTQIA+ Initiatives and Support Rainbow Representatives

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Thank you for writing to continue your advocacy for supports for LGBTQIA+ students. As Mr. Barnes explained when he presented the Superintendent's Proposed FY 2025 Operating Budget on Thursday, the school system finds itself caught between rising costs and essentially flat funding. This is not a unique situation and is playing out elsewhere in Maryland and across the country. Because HCPSS does not have the ability to increase revenues, we must make some cuts to services to maintain a balanced budget, as is required by law. The current budget proposal increases class sizes and implements staff reductions at both the school- and central-office level in order to offset increases in areas such as staff costs, transportation, and insurance.

We are happy to report, however, that under the current proposal, the LGBTQIA+ Initiatives Specialist position is not being cut. Additionally, we are leveraging grant funding to continue the quarterly rainbow rep meetings. We will also be seeking additional grant opportunities to fund the continued expansion of supports to our LGBTQIA+ students. Barring the receipt of additional grant funds, however, we do not have the funds to significantly expand costs under the FY25 budget. We understand that this will limit our ability to grow supports in this area. However, other similar systemwide student supports will also remain at current levels or be curtailed due to the fiscal situation.

Please continue to speak highly of the work the office has been able to accomplish and the ongoing need to ensure safe and welcoming learning environments for all students.

We look forward to continued collaboration in support of our LGBTQIA+ youth.

Thank you, Caroline

Caroline Y. Walker, Ph.D.
Acting Chief Academic Officer
Executive Director of Program Innovation & Student Well-being
Howard County Public School System
10920 Clarksville Pike
Ellicott City, MD 21042
410-313-7136 (phone)

From: Superintendent <superintendent@hcpss.org>
Sent: Wednesday, January 17, 2024 12:59 PM
To: Caroline Walker <Caroline_Walker@hcpss.org>
Cc: Catalina Ruiz Rojas <Catalina_Ruiz_Rojas@hcpss.org>
Subject: FW: [External] Request for Budgetary Support to Expand LGBTQIA+ Initiatives and Support Rainbow Representatives

Good afternoon, Caroline

Bill asked that I forward this email to you for follow-up.

Best,
Jerilyn

From: Matthew Molyett <matthewmolyett@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 8, 2024 11:33 AM
To: Superintendent <superintendent@hcpss.org>; Bill Barnes <Bill_Barnes@hcpss.org>; BoE Email <boe@hcpss.org>
Cc: Calvin Ball <calvinball@howardcountymd.gov>; CouncilMail <councilmail@howardcountymd.gov>
Subject: [External] Request for Budgetary Support to Expand LGBTQIA+ Initiatives and Support Rainbow Representatives

Some people who received this message don't often get email from matthewmolyett@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear HCPSS Decisionmakers,

I am writing to request your support for expanded budgetary resources to significantly enhance our commitment to serving LGBTQIA+ students and staff in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). As you know, ensuring a safe, inclusive, and affirming learning environment for all is central to our mission and aligns with the "Learning and Leading with Equity" goal outlined in the HCPSS Strategic Call to Action.

While the dedicated efforts of the existing LGBTQIA+ Initiatives Specialist have undoubtedly laid a strong foundation, the sheer size and diverse needs of HCPSS necessitate further expansion to fully realize our equity goals. The Specialist has achieved significant progress, including coordinating the HoCo Rainbow Conference, overseeing the Rainbow Vision literacy magazine, running the Read the Rainbow Book club, providing Parental support via LBGTeaQ&A, and including the involvement of LGBTQIA+ families and the community by facilitating the LGBTQIA+ Advisory Group. However, reaching and effectively supporting the multitude of LGBTQIA+ students and staff across all 52 schools with a single individual presents undeniable limitations.

Therefore, I propose a strategic allocation of resources to increase LGBTQIA+ Initiatives Headcount by adding two additional team members who will develop and deliver essential training on LGBTQIA+ issues for Central Office and school-based staff, empowering them to better serve our students as well as collaborate with curriculum coordinators to build LGBTQIA+ inclusive curriculum offerings and resources, ensuring comprehensive representation and affirming experiences for all students.

I also want to see investment to enhance support for Rainbow Representatives. Recognizing the crucial role they play in fostering safe spaces and supporting LGBTQIA+ students, we request parity in stipends for Rainbow Representatives, aligning them with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Liaisons.

This investment will demonstrate appreciation for their commitment and attract qualified individuals to these vital positions. Additionally, to ensure optimal learning and minimize disruption, we propose dedicated training days with substitute coverage for Rainbow Representatives. This commitment to ongoing professional development will equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support students.

Such formal training for Rainbow Representatives would provide structured training encompassing cultural competency, conflict resolution, mental health support, and best practices for LGBTQIA+ student advocacy.

This expansion, while requiring additional resources, will yield significant long-term benefits for our students, staff, and overall school climate. I anticipate the requested budget allocation will translate into tangible improvements in equity, student success, and staff morale.

Investing in our LGBTQIA+ initiatives and Rainbow Representatives is not just a financial decision; it is a moral imperative and a strategic investment in the future of HCPSS. By fostering a diverse and inclusive learning environment for all, we ensure that every student reaches their full potential and thrives.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal further and detail the projected impact of these enhancements.

Sincerely,
Matthew Molyett
Acting President of Community Allies of Rainbow Youth
410 674-2049

From: clmrhayden@netzero.com
To: [Ball, Calvin](#); [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: HCPSS funding- Increase funding
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 9:36:28 AM

[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 members of the Howard County Council,

Please explain why you cannot provide the HCPSS with an additional increase in funding. As a resident of Howard County, I have watched developers build and build around us here in Ellicott City, forcing our students to play musical chairs between schools. I am watching right now as developers build a whole new development on Marriottsville Road, which is going to cause a congested Route 40 and Marriottsville intersection to become a disaster in the near future when all of the townhouses are complete. How can we allow this to happen? Developers do not pay their fair share to manage infrastructure, yet we allow our students and teachers to suffer as well as the taxpayers?

The Turf Valley expansion is another example with the same story- a huge development built with no school infrastructure to send these children to.

While home values increase and our taxes accordingly, I am sorry to see that our children and educators have to suffer while we continue to pay our fair share.

Thank you for your time and reconsideration of the HCPSS budget.

Sincerely,

Megan Hayden

clmrhayden@netzero.com

From: Robert Miller <robmilfam@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 20, 2024 9:39 PM
To: boe@hcpss.org; bill_barnes@hcpss.org; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail
Subject: HCPSS Budget

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Dear Board of Education Members, Mr. Barnes, Dr. Ball, and County Council Members,

This year's HCPSS budget situation is obviously very challenging and disheartening; I wish there was a simple positive solution, and I do not envy the challenges with which you are faced. I appreciate Mr. Barnes' approach regarding providing general information and rationales, though I lack intimate knowledge of many relevant issues. I would like to briefly mention a few thoughts, though; please contact me if you would like more elaboration.

As a retired HCPSS band director who taught in the school system from 1981-2015, I witnessed the building of an extraordinary music program that has had a positive effect in a multitude of ways on many thousands of lives year after year (please let me know if you would like elucidation). It is an example of a program that has been carefully built with the tremendous dedication and support of staff members, parents, students, and the community, and is now the gold standard in the state. I grew up in Prince George's County when it was the gold standard, but due to poor decision-making and a lack of support, it was severely damaged in the late 1970's and has yet to recover. I mention this as an example of the importance of considering the long-term effects of your decisions, so programs built with tremendous effort and funding will not be harmed in a significant way.

I realize that resources are limited, the proposed cuts are painful, and that the Board is not self-funding. I think that we, as a county, need to decide if we are going to do what it takes to maintain a high-quality school system going forward. Though raising taxes is not generally a popular idea, perhaps doing so in a progressive way could be a consideration, especially as those who own high-value property will benefit financially the most from being in a highly-regarded school district.

Additional thoughts:

Though I am generally supportive of later high school start times, I am not sure that the way it has been implemented is worth the result. From what I see, it is costing a lot of money, yet many students still cannot sleep later due to longer walk times, bus issues, or accommodations that have been made to the original plan. Especially given the financial challenges of FY25, I would encourage consideration of the initiative to determine if the cost/benefit is close enough to what was intended, and if it should remain a priority given the circumstances.

Chromebooks are now low enough in price that, over a four-year period, the per-year cost would be similar to many binders. Maybe they should be considered school supplies to be provided by parents, except for those with financial challenges. This would reduce HCPSS technology-related costs (again, please contact me if you would like elucidation).

Thank you very much for your consideration of my comments, and for your efforts as you try to do what is in the best interest of HCPSS students. Please be in touch if I can be of assistance. Best wishes as you pursue the best possible outcome to the budget situation.

Sincerely,

Robert

Robert Miller
410-227-8445
robmilfam@gmail.com

From: Debby Carr <debbycarr1@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2024 10:26 PM
To: bill_barnes@hcpss.org; boe@hcpss.org; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail
Subject: Elementary school Class size impacts learning, achievement, behavior, emotional well being,

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

Subject: Urgent Appeal for HCPSS funding

Dear Dr. Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Acting-Superintendent Barnes,

I hope this letter finds you well. As a proud grandparent of a student and a Howard County resident, I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential increase in class size proposed in the Howard County Public School System

It is very distressing to realize that additional numbers will be added to already burdened teachers but the biggest concern is what it will mean for the students.--especially for our youngest as well as our most vulnerable students with more social emotional needs

It will mean LESS learning, less attention, less help, less direction, less ability to create a bond with their teacher because it is just not possible to adequately meet the needs of students you are talking about adding to the classroom. It will set students, during their foundational learning years, up for failure.

Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year but especially this year.

Research consistently highlights the positive impact of lower class size and the ability of a teacher to teach, lead, guide and bond with students creating a safe welcoming environment IF there are manageable numbers. Do not increase class size especially in elementary where students are learning to read/write and the foundations of learning occur!

I understand the budgetary challenges that HCPSS faces, but I urge you to consider the devastating effects of bigger, less personal classrooms will have in elementary school. By investing more in HCPSS overall as a county, we are investing in the future leaders of our community.

I kindly request that you work together to solve any proposed cuts to elementary schools especially. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Deborah Carr
8747 Doves Fly Way
Laurel, MD 20723

From: Lisa Bradley <lbradley410@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2024 12:42 PM
Subject: Urgent Appeal for HCPSS funding

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

Dear Dr. Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Acting-Superintendent Barnes,

As a proud parent of a music-loving student, I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS).

It is alarming to see the report in the Baltimore Sun regarding so many cuts to positions in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

I also want to email to remind our elected officials that music education, in all of its forms, plays a pivotal role in shaping well-rounded individuals, fostering creativity, discipline, and teamwork. My child's involvement in music in Howard County schools has not only enriched their academic experience but has also contributed to their overall personal development.

Research consistently highlights the positive impact of music education on academic performance. Students engaged in music often show improved cognitive skills, better concentration, and enhanced problem-solving abilities. These benefits extend beyond the music room and positively influence their academic achievements.

Furthermore, our Gold Standard music programs contribute to building a sense of community within our schools. The collaborative nature of musical ensembles teaches students the value of teamwork, discipline, and perseverance. These qualities are essential not only in their academic journey but also in their future careers.

I understand the budgetary challenges that HCPSS faces, but I urge you to consider the invaluable contribution that music programs make to our students' lives. By investing more in HCPSS overall as a county, we are investing in the future leaders, artists, and innovators of our community.

I kindly request that you work together to solve any proposed cuts to music funding and continue to support **all programs** that are considered well-managed and *essential* in our county.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lisa Bradley
Parent at Mt. Hebron High School

From: Javon <jnwickliff@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 24, 2024 10:57 PM
To: Ball, Calvin; boe@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; bill_barnes@hcpss.org
Subject: Urgent Appeal for HCPSS funding

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

Dear Dr. Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Acting-Superintendent Barnes,

I hope this email finds you well. As a parent of an enthusiastic elementary school student, I am writing to express my profound concern regarding the potential programmatic and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS).

Growing up in the Deep South, I yearned for a quality education and witnessed the stark differences between the haves and the have nots when it came to resources. Upon moving to Howard County, I was particularly impressed by not only the values of the county itself, but the reputation of the public school system. Despite friends and neighbors encouraging us to choose private or parochial, we made the decision as a family to proudly enroll our son into public schools as we believed in the system. Unfortunately, upon reading the report in the Baltimore Sun regarding the many budget cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS), that pride began to quickly diminish. Eliminating the BSAP Summer Institute and G/T Summer Institute directly impacts children of color, children who wish to hone in on certain skill sets, as well as those who may not have the financial resources that other camps require. These camps are not only beneficial, but also more affordable for families in general. By eliminating these programs, we leave some of our most vulnerable without positive outlets during summer.

Additionally, reduction of Behavioral Supports, School Counseling, and Psychological Services seem unethical in nature, as these cuts would directly impact students with social/emotional needs, special needs, and those receiving IEP and 504 Plan Services. As a Licensed Mental Health Professional who works at a school in a neighboring county, I have seen first hand how difficult it can be to manage the needs of young people trying to navigate the world with limited resources. As the schools are already overcrowded and understaffed, many of the students end up getting suspended/expelled instead of receiving the much needed mental health services they require as there simply are not enough staff to address their needs. Although I work extremely hard in my position to lesson this trend, as a parent of a child with a 504 Plan, it is heartbreaking to know that such a proposal could one day place my own child in a similar position. It is not fair, and our children deserve so much more. They cannot advocate for themselves, but as parents, voters, and community members, we can. This is not what I would have ever expected to see in Howard County, particularly in a school system that prides itself on excellence.

The proposal also lays out the potential for class size increases. Class sizes are already large, and increasing the class sizes all while reducing the amount of aide in the classroom seems counter intuitive. Our teachers deserve better. Our children deserve better. We will not continue to be a shining star educationally if we begin to do things that no longer set us apart. I understand that sometimes hard decisions have to be made, but please do not make them at the cost of our children, our future.

In closing, I sincerely ask you all to work together to ensure that the Howard County Public School standard continues to be something that we can all be proud of.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Javon Blue

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline."
2 Timothy 1:7

January 25, 2024

Board of Education of Howard County
10910 Clarksville Pike
Ellicott City, Maryland 20142

Re: Save our Critical Services and Teacher Jobs

Dear Board Members:

My name is Daljit Kaur Soni and I am the mother of two kindergarteners and a 2nd grader at Pointers Run Elementary School.

I am writing to express my serious concern regarding the proposed cuts to 348 teachers jobs in areas deemed as “critical services” by an internally leaked memo.

Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. I have personally been approached by 8 parents of special needs students who shared with me horrendous experiences of neglect, denial of services and reduction of existing services even before these proposed budget cuts.

We had to hire a private speech therapist out of our own pocketbook because the County removed the speech pathologist. HCPSS is now providing ONLY virtual speech therapy. A virtual professional, no matter how talented, cannot facilitate musculoskeletal exercises and strength building via a computer screen. You can't offer competitive salaries to keep good teachers when you cut this many jobs. They will go elsewhere and will not return.

We are accepting the cuts of services from every direction. From 3,000 families losing their bus service altogether to now telling us that our students will no longer receive technology education, or alternative education which is critical for students with special needs and behavioral issues.

We are in this \$100 million budget deficit because of years and years of HCPSS and the Board failing to ask the County Executive for what is needed by our school communities. Make your demands to the County executive clear and complete instead of protecting a flawed budgeting process.

Even if the enrollment numbers are stable or stagnant, this does not override the years and years of increasing student numbers without a simultaneous increase in levels of service or maintenance. School services in this county were in a steady decline even before Covid hit.

For people listening, you should know that a State run audit of HCPSS in April 2023 revealed that the budget deficit was primarily the result of decisions by the Board here to underfund projected actuarial benefit costs.

This audit also revealed that HCPSS engages in illegal contract procurement, with nearly \$40 million spent without following MD state laws to publish the contract bids before they are awarded. Evidence showed 15 contracts totaling \$12.6 million were awarded by senior management as the sole source on these contracts without any justification.

Evidence also showed that construction management firms have been awarded contracts without a competitive bidding process. Sounds similar to the Zum Bus debacle.

Speaking of which, what are the terms of the separation agreement with Supervisor martirano, is he also receiving a \$1.6 million payout like the Superintendent who resigned before him in 2017?

Nonetheless, the Board and HCPSS must revamp internal controls and accountability. in certain areas, including the processing of payments for

Please do the right thing, instead of cutting out teachers who provide critical services to our special needs communities, who support reading and math specialists, please seriously take a look at those on the top. I hope that the proposed cuts to the central office are given the same due analysis as cuts to the teachers that directly enrich the academic experience.

Thank you for the jobs that you do, and for your consideration today.

Sincerely,

Daljit K. Soni, Esq.
Residents of Fulton, MD
Parents of Students at Pointers Run Elementary

From: [Oxman, Rachael](#)
To: [Ball, Calvin](#); "boe@hcpss.org"; [CouncilMail](#); "bill_barnes@hcpss.org"
Subject: Urgent Appeal for HCPSS funding: Do not cut our music programs
Date: Thursday, January 25, 2024 9:25:33 AM

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

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Dear Dr. Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Acting-Superintendent Barnes,

I am a parent to two elementary school students at Centennial Lane Elementary. I am distressed to learn that Howard County Public School System is considering budget and staffing cuts to the our school's music program. Two years ago my husband and I specifically chose to move from California to Howard County Maryland for the robust public school system. We are both physicians who deeply value our children's education experience and are tax payers who are happy to pay more to have the right educational resources in our county.

It is shocking to see the report in the Baltimore Sun regarding so many cuts to positions in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years and there is an inevitable breaking point when we must acknowledge that we are compromising the educational quality of a school system that has been our pride and shining distinction in Maryland. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues without compromising staffing, class sizes and our music programs.

I understand the budgetary challenges that HCPSS faces, but I urge you to consider the invaluable contribution that music programs make to our students' lives. By investing more in HCPSS overall as a county, we are investing in the future leaders, artists, and innovators of our community.

I kindly request that you work together to solve any proposed cuts to music funding and continue to support **all programs** that are considered well-managed and *essential* in our county.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rachael Oxman & Dr. Forster Chhean

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From: Steve Reinken <sreinken@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 25, 2024 3:55 PM
To: natalie.ziegler@house.state.md.us; Ball, Calvin; boe@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; bill_barnes@hcpss.org; katiefry.hester@senate.state.md.us; chao.uw@house.state.md.us
Subject: Urgent: Howard County Schools Budget Deficit

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

Dear Howard County and Maryland State Leaders,

I am writing to urge immediate cooperation and resolution of devastating cuts to Howard County Public Schools (HCPSS). The budget squeeze facing our high-quality local schools due to the unfunded, state-mandated pre-kindergarten program which is presenting an existential crisis we must address immediately through advocacy and intergovernmental cooperation.

Specifically, the state recently implemented expanded pre-K access without appropriating sufficient long-term funding. While praiseworthy in intent, this creates massive financial strain for counties now expected to foot the bill for a state priority. HCPSS, in particular, faces eliminating successful programs that have produced tremendous student outcomes.

Furthermore, the windfall of casino and lottery gambling expansion never materialized into promised budgetary relief for Maryland schools. A 2016 analysis concluded that over \$2 billion less has reached public education than initial projections stated (Baltimore Sun). Now, this is likely billions more.

Additionally, I am alarmed to see Howard County dedicating tens of millions towards new libraries and infrastructure projects. While public libraries provide value, funding them while our schools face crisis choices demands immediate reassessment of priorities. Brick, mortar, and glass should not take precedence over educational access, equality, and advancement for all of Howard County's youth.

I implore you as our leaders to redirect funding towards the structural integrity of our existing school infrastructure first and foremost. Moreover, I urge you to collaborate closely and establish cooperative solutions that share the burden of proposed education reforms. No matter how admirable the motivations, we cannot implement progressive

social initiatives on the backs of counties already delivering academic excellence on strained budgets.

The future of Howard County begins with the children. Together, we must ensure they all have access to the schools and programs needed to fulfill their immense promise as the next generation of this community we deeply love.

Thank you for your public service,

Stephen Reinken, Howard County parent, resident, and volunteer youth soccer coach

From: Sherell Brown <sbgood12@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, January 26, 2024 7:41 PM
To: Ball, Calvin; boe@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; bill_barnes@hcpss.org; BudgetFeedback@hcpss.org
Subject: Response to HCPSS Superintendent's Proposed FY2025 Operating Budget

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

Dear Dr. Calvin Ball, HCPSS Board of Education, Howard County Council Members and Acting Superintendent Barnes,

I'm writing to implore you to:

1. Fully fund the CY 2025 HCPSS Operating Budget with no cuts to programming and staff that directly impact students.
2. Delay "new priorities" until you can sort out "existing priorities". The last 3-4 years has impacted many companies financially with COVID-19 pandemic and inflation. Take time to assess how budget cuts will impact current student and staff outcomes.

I am a parent of a first grader at Bellow Springs Elementary and though the classrooms are overcrowded, their resources seem limited, and the teachers are stretched thin. She absolutely loves school. She's most excited when she gets to check out a book in her Media class and thoroughly enjoyed GT summer program and has been looking forward to attending again this year. After reviewing the budget and researching Maryland's Blueprint for the Future, the proposed budget cuts are clearly in opposition of the direction the state of Maryland is going as outlined in the states' blueprint. In 3 of the 5 pillars, the proposed budget is clearly moving in the wrong direction, for example:

- **High quality & diverse teachers and leaders.** How can you expect to "create and sustain a teaching faculty that reflects diversity", when the current staff is being cut, class sizes are increasing which further taxes our teachers? Aside, the teachers are taxed which could impact their personal health further contributing to the cost of healthcare.
- **College and career Readiness.** How can you say you're driving towards CCR, when you are cutting funding for programs that were created to better prepare students for college and careers like Black Student Achievement Program, G/T seminars and summer programs, music, media and other programs?
- **Resources to ensure all students are successful.** You're proposing cuts to behavioral supports, while the blueprint is moving towards services such as additional behavioral supports.

None of these line items can be considered as standalone cuts. You have to take time to assess how cutting behavioral supports impacts children with special needs, the teachers responsible for these kids during the day and their classmates. My daughter is currently in a class with a mix of special needs students, students operating at grade-level and students operating above grade level. Just this year one of the students had an outburst and injured the teacher. This is apparently an ongoing issue in class. The teacher has minimal support for these students, and she's still expected to accommodate students at varying levels. How is this fair? How does having teaching environments like these attract the best teachers? Making further cuts will most certainly exacerbate the situation.

Please consider:

1. Using the community to advocate for the funding and concessions we need. Please don't decide in a vacuum that there's only one course of action.
2. Delaying "new" initiatives. Allow time to assess impact and outcomes of budget cuts. We're sacrificing the education of the kids that are already enrolled for programs that haven't begun.
3. Thinking outside of the box. What school systems are innovative and managing well? Can we learn from them? Consider administrative restructuring. Are there roles that are outdated that can transition into new roles or provide support to schools and staff in new ways.

I recognize making cuts isn't easy. I also know that Howard County is full of passionate, bright and innovative people and organizations that can help the school system get back to the school system I heard about when I was considering moving to Maryland.

Please fully fund Howard County Public Schools 2025 operating budget. I'm confident that if you take the time, you can identify opportunities to improve school operations without impacting our students/faculty and staff.

Thank you,
Sherell Goodwin
sbgood12@gmail.com
504-606-9192

From: Lehigh Mearns <lehigh.mearns@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2024 1:30 PM
To: natalie.ziegler@house.state.md.us; Ball, Calvin; boe@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; bill_barnes@hcpss.org; katiefry.hester@senate.state.md.us; chao.uw@house.state.md.us
Subject: Urgent: Howard County Schools Budget Deficit

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

Dear Howard County and Maryland State Leaders,

I am writing to urge immediate cooperation and resolution of devastating cuts to Howard County Public Schools (HCPSS). In 2021, my family moved from Northern Virginia, and Howard County's incredible public school system was a large part of that decision. I have three young children in 4th, 1st, and pre-K age, so we are severely impacted by these potentially devastating cuts.

The budget squeeze facing our high-quality local schools due to the unfunded, state-mandated pre-kindergarten program which is presenting an existential crisis we must address immediately through advocacy and intergovernmental cooperation.

Specifically, the state recently implemented expanded pre-K access without appropriating sufficient long-term funding. While praiseworthy in intent, this creates massive financial strain for counties now expected to foot the bill for a state priority. HCPSS, in particular, faces eliminating successful programs that have produced tremendous student outcomes.

Furthermore, the windfall of casino and lottery gambling expansion never materialized into promised budgetary relief for Maryland schools. A 2016 analysis concluded that over \$2 billion less has reached public education than initial projections stated (Baltimore Sun). Now, this is likely billions more.

Additionally, I am alarmed to see Howard County dedicating tens of millions towards new libraries and infrastructure projects. While public libraries provide value, funding them while our schools face crisis choices demands immediate reassessment of priorities. Brick, mortar, and glass should not take precedence over educational access, equality, and advancement for all of Howard County's youth.

I implore you as our leaders to redirect funding towards the structural integrity of our existing school infrastructure first and foremost. Moreover, I urge you to collaborate closely and establish cooperative solutions that share the burden of proposed education reforms. No matter how admirable the motivations, we cannot implement progressive social initiatives on the backs of counties already delivering academic excellence on strained budgets.

The future of Howard County begins with the children. Together, we must ensure they all have access to the schools and programs needed to fulfill their immense promise as the next generation of

this community we deeply love.

Thank you for your public service,

Lehigh Mearns

Proud TRES Parent

--

Lehigh Mearns

From: Amanda Reyes <radnama@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 2, 2024 7:26 PM
To: Ball, Calvin; boe@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; bill_barnes@hcpss.org
Subject: Urgent Appeal for HCPSS funding

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Dear Dr. Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Acting-Superintendent Barnes,

I hope this letter finds you well. As a proud Howard County parent, I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). This news is devastating to our entire county, as I hope is witnessed by the many emails, letters, and testimony that has been submitted. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

Particularly:

- Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This budget proposes to increase them across every school.
- Removal of 3rd grade strings, the first building block to why HCPSS has been recognized, year after year as one of the Best Communities for Music Education Districts by the National Association of Music Merchants Foundation.
- Removal of the environmental educator position, despite the fact that this is the only position, and environmental education is a state requirement and the position brings in much more in grant funding that supports Howard County students
- Removal of Gifted and Talented Program teaching positions, teachers who improve educational opportunities to all students.

These cuts have a direct impact on the quality of the Howard County education system. This system is why families want to live here, why companies locate here, why I gulp and pay my tax bill every year, and a major part of why Howard County is (in my biased opinion) the best county in Maryland.

I kindly request that you work together to solve any proposed funding challenges while continuing to fully support all programs that are considered well-managed and essential in our county.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Amanda Reyes
radnama@gmail.com

From: Summer Romack <summer.romack@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 3, 2024 11:03 AM
To: boe@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; bill_barnes@hcpss.org
Cc: clarence.lam@senate.state.md.us; guy.guzzone@senate.state.md.us; chao.wu@house.state.md.us; natalie.ziegler@house.state.md.us; courtney.watson@house.state.md.us; pam.guzzone@house.state.md.us; terri.hill@house.state.md.us; jessica.feldmark@house.state.md.us; vanessa.atterbeary@house.state.md.us; jen.terrasa@house.state.md.us
Subject: Written testimony regarding BOE Operating Budget

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Dear Dr. Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Acting-Superintendent Barnes,

I trust this letter finds you well. As a proud graduate of OMHS and a parent to two students who have thrived in the HCPSS system, I am writing to express my sincere concern about the potential program and staffing cuts in our schools. My son graduated in May of 2022 and my daughter will be graduating next year. Both attended OMHS, OMMS and TSES, schools with dedicated staff and a passionate community.

The recent report in the Baltimore Sun detailing the proposed cuts within the Howard County Public School System is disheartening. Increased class sizes in recent years have already placed a strain on both students and teachers, and further reductions are simply unacceptable. I implore our elected officials to collaborate with HCPSS to address this crisis promptly and to find sustainable solutions to the recurring funding challenges faced by the system.

I would like to emphasize the critical role that music education and sports play in shaping well-rounded individuals, fostering creativity, discipline, and teamwork. My children's participation in these programs has not only enriched their academic experience but has also significantly contributed to their overall personal development. Events like String-a-palooza exemplify the remarkable achievements possible when the community comes together to celebrate the power of music. Additionally, sports have provided valuable outlets for my children to excel, building confidence and contributing to their sense of identity and camaraderie with their peers.

Research consistently underscores the positive impact of music education on academic performance. Students engaged in music often exhibit improved cognitive skills, better concentration, and enhanced problem-solving abilities. These benefits extend beyond the music room, positively influencing their academic achievements.

Furthermore, numerous studies highlight the importance of sports in the development of school-age children. Regular participation in sports has been linked to improved physical health, enhanced social skills, and a reduction in stress and anxiety levels. Additionally, students who engage in sports activities tend to exhibit better time management, goal-setting, and teamwork skills, all of which are crucial for their future success.

Moreover, our Gold Standard music programs contribute significantly to building a sense of community within our schools. The collaborative nature of musical ensembles teaches students the value of teamwork, discipline, and perseverance – qualities that are not only essential in their

academic journey but also pivotal in their future careers. Both of my children participated in strings during elementary school and opted for theater and chorus whenever possible. These programs played an important role in their well-rounded education.

While I acknowledge the budgetary challenges faced by HCPSS, I urge you to carefully consider the invaluable contribution that music and sports programs make to our students' lives. By investing more comprehensively in HCPSS as a county, we are investing in the future leaders, artists, and innovators of our community.

I respectfully request that you collaborate to find alternatives to the proposed cuts to music and sports funding and continue to support programs that are well-managed and essential in our county.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Summer Romack

6469 Skyward Ct.
Columbia, MD 21045

To: Howard County Board of Education

From: Samantha Norris

Date: February 14, 2024

Subject: Stop the Devastating Impact of HCPSS Operating Budget Cuts

Dear Members of the Board of Education,

I am writing to express my strongest opposition to the proposed budget cuts to the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) operating budget. These cuts will have a detrimental impact on our students, educators, and the entire Howard County community.

The mission statement of the HCPSS states that “HCPSS ensures academic success and social-emotional well-being for each student in an inclusive and nurturing environment that closes opportunity gaps.” These budget cuts will directly impede the HCPSS’s ability to achieve this mission, by failing our students and staff not only on an academic level, but on a social-emotional well-being level as well.

For too long, our students have borne the brunt of the consequences of poor management decisions made at the administrative level, and this round of cuts is no different. The students are the ones we are charged with serving and protecting, but they are the ones being harmed the most, and those making the decisions justify this by saying “kids are resilient”. This is what was said when HCPSS stayed fully virtual during COVID, and what was said when the insane redistricting was pushed through in 2020. How much more resilient are we expecting them to be after this round of cuts takes away their teachers, takes away the programs they love and takes away so many of the supports that were put in place to deal with the other poor decisions that they were forced to cope with?

Cuts should be made elsewhere, namely from the central office and administration, and the county and state must be petitioned to address these shortfalls and imbalanced priorities.

The Harm of Budget Cuts:

- Reduced educational quality: The proposed cuts will lead to larger class sizes, fewer elective courses, particularly in the fine arts and G/T areas that so many of our students benefit from (and which set our county above the rest), and diminished access to essential support services like counselors and mental health professionals. This will compromise the quality of education our students receive, hindering their academic progress and development. How can we expect our teachers to nurture and include all students when we are squeezing more and more students into their classes? And “squeezing” in the literal sense, many of the

classrooms in our schools will not accommodate another desk. THIS FAILS TO MEET THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL MISSION.

- Notable aside: the percentage of students received special services related to Special Education and Limited English Proficiency has increased steadily since the 2020-2021 school year (as included in the budget proposal); the proposed cuts will remove educators working with these students, therefore requiring fewer staff to work with the ever-growing number of students in need.
- Negative impact on educators: The proposed budget cuts include significant teacher layoffs, which will lead to larger classroom sizes, decreased teacher morale and lower test scores and success rates for our students, who we claim to support. This disrupts our school communities and weakens the foundation of our education system. How will teachers nurture students when they have nothing left in their cup to give? Impact noted in the budget document include:
 - “Decrease in instructional mentoring...and intervention support”
 - “Less support to schools for supplies and materials that allow for student participation.”
 - “Less support in the front office for students, staff, and the community”

THIS FAILS TO MEET THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL MISSION.

- Harm to community vibrancy: Strong schools are the bedrock of vibrant communities. Weakening HCPSS will jeopardize property values, employer attraction, and overall well-being. While raising taxes is an option, it risks deterring residents. Cutting education investment sends a clear message: Howard County no longer prioritizes its children's education and future, prompting families to seek opportunities elsewhere. While HCPSS was once the pride of the county, attracting residents both domestically and internationally, our reputation is faltering, and these cuts will only aid the dismantling of our once great education system.

Alternative Cuts:

Understanding that cuts will have to be made, particularly in light of the underfunded mandated implementation of the Blueprint passed by the State Legislature, I suggest you look into cutting other areas of the operating budget.:

- Redirect the capital budget for the Lakefront Library to a new school. A fancy new library is nice, but new schools are necessary and will achieve the same goals. I understand this is a capital budget issue, rather than operating budget, but this will alleviate some of the overcrowding issues being created and amplified by the impacts of the operating budget.
- Eliminate unnecessary, costly, bus routes by having students eligible to walk to neighborhood schools back to those schools. The transportation contracts put in place result in a nearly \$9 million dollar increase year over year.

- Cut costs on consultants who constantly recommend costly implementations of new curricula (which, in the case of elementary school reading, last about 2 years), new redistricting plans, new school start times, etc.
- Evaluate the need for, and efficiency of, the robust central office and administrative staff. The impact statements for the reductions in those areas are “increased workload”; this is what teachers already being made to do, before considering the increased class sizes. And the teachers aren’t paid as much. True cuts don’t appear to have been made here, rather positions were shifted around and reclassified.
- Review benefits plans and ensure that the best deals are being achieved for all. there is approximately a \$16 million dollar increase year over year in this area.

Alternatives to Cuts:

Instead of sacrificing the future of our children, I urge you to consider alternative solutions:

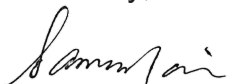
- **Prioritize education:** Explore reallocation of resources within the broader budget to prioritize education funding. I understand that much of this occurs and the County Executive or County Council level, and encourage you to work with them to work towards more amenable solutions.
- **Seek innovative solutions:** Collaborate with stakeholders to identify creative ways to optimize efficiency and generate additional revenue while minimizing cuts to core educational programs.
- **Engage the community:** Openly discuss the budget challenges and work transparently with the community to find solutions that everyone can support.

The fact that the HCPSS budget would be harder to balance was not a secret. This has been known for years. But plans were not put in place to manage this hardship. We are tapping into our fund balance to support our operating budget annually; THIS IS NOT SUSTAINABLE. These funds will not replenish and will run dry. Reach out to the County Executive. Reach out to the County Council. Demand more funds for our schools and do not cut programs from our students.

I urge you to reconsider the proposed budget cuts and prioritize the needs of our students, educators, and future generations. Please consider alternative solutions that protect the quality of education in HCPSS and invest in the success of our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,


Samantha Norris

From: Samantha Norris <samanthasydney@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 14, 2024 1:07 PM
To: boe@hcpss.org
Cc: budgetfeedback@hcpss.org; executive; CouncilMail
Subject: Concerns over HCPSS Budget
Attachments: BOE Budget Letter.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Hello,

I have attached a letter to this email outlining my concerns and imploring you to please reconsider the proposed budget. The overcrowding of our schools, coupled with the programming cuts will be harmful to our students, educators and community as a whole; we cannot continue down this path.

County Executive Ball and Council Members, please reconsider the priorities of the county and put the schools and our children back at the top of the list. They are what paved the way for this county to get where it is today; without their top tier performance and reputation, other aspects of the county's economy will also suffer.

Thank you for your time,
Samantha Norris

To: Howard County Board of Education

From: Samantha Norris

Date: February 14, 2024

Subject: Stop the Devastating Impact of HCPSS Operating Budget Cuts

Dear Members of the Board of Education,

I am writing to express my strongest opposition to the proposed budget cuts to the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) operating budget. These cuts will have a detrimental impact on our students, educators, and the entire Howard County community.

The mission statement of the HCPSS states that “HCPSS ensures academic success and social-emotional well-being for each student in an inclusive and nurturing environment that closes opportunity gaps.” These budget cuts will directly impede the HCPSS’s ability to achieve this mission, by failing our students and staff not only on an academic level, but on a social-emotional well-being level as well.

For too long, our students have borne the brunt of the consequences of poor management decisions made at the administrative level, and this round of cuts is no different. The students are the ones we are charged with serving and protecting, but they are the ones being harmed the most, and those making the decisions justify this by saying “kids are resilient”. This is what was said when HCPSS stayed fully virtual during COVID, and what was said when the insane redistricting was pushed through in 2020. How much more resilient are we expecting them to be after this round of cuts takes away their teachers, takes away the programs they love and takes away so many of the supports that were put in place to deal with the other poor decisions that they were forced to cope with?

Cuts should be made elsewhere, namely from the central office and administration, and the county and state must be petitioned to address these shortfalls and imbalanced priorities.

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- Reduced educational quality: The proposed cuts will lead to larger class sizes, fewer elective courses, particularly in the fine arts and G/T areas that so many of our students benefit from (and which set our county above the rest), and diminished access to essential support services like counselors and mental health professionals. This will compromise the quality of education our students receive, hindering their academic progress and development. How can we expect our teachers to nurture and include all students when we are squeezing more and more students into their classes? And “squeezing” in the literal sense, many of the

classrooms in our schools will not accommodate another desk. THIS FAILS TO MEET THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL MISSION.

- Notable aside: the percentage of students received special services related to Special Education and Limited English Proficiency has increased steadily since the 2020-2021 school year (as included in the budget proposal); the proposed cuts will remove educators working with these students, therefore requiring fewer staff to work with the ever-growing number of students in need.
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 - “Less support in the front office for students, staff, and the community”

THIS FAILS TO MEET THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL MISSION.

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Alternative Cuts:

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- Redirect the capital budget for the Lakefront Library to a new school. A fancy new library is nice, but new schools are necessary and will achieve the same goals. I understand this is a capital budget issue, rather than operating budget, but this will alleviate some of the overcrowding issues being created and amplified by the impacts of the operating budget.
- Eliminate unnecessary, costly, bus routes by having students eligible to walk to neighborhood schools back to those schools. The transportation contracts put in place result in a nearly \$9 million dollar increase year over year.

- Cut costs on consultants who constantly recommend costly implementations of new curricula (which, in the case of elementary school reading, last about 2 years), new redistricting plans, new school start times, etc.
- Evaluate the need for, and efficiency of, the robust central office and administrative staff. The impact statements for the reductions in those areas are “increased workload”; this is what teachers already being made to do, before considering the increased class sizes. And the teachers aren’t paid as much. True cuts don’t appear to have been made here, rather positions were shifted around and reclassified.
- Review benefits plans and ensure that the best deals are being achieved for all. there is approximately a \$16 million dollar increase year over year in this area.

Alternatives to Cuts:

Instead of sacrificing the future of our children, I urge you to consider alternative solutions:

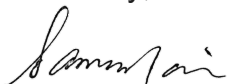
- **Prioritize education:** Explore reallocation of resources within the broader budget to prioritize education funding. I understand that much of this occurs and the County Executive or County Council level, and encourage you to work with them to work towards more amenable solutions.
- **Seek innovative solutions:** Collaborate with stakeholders to identify creative ways to optimize efficiency and generate additional revenue while minimizing cuts to core educational programs.
- **Engage the community:** Openly discuss the budget challenges and work transparently with the community to find solutions that everyone can support.

The fact that the HCPSS budget would be harder to balance was not a secret. This has been known for years. But plans were not put in place to manage this hardship. We are tapping into our fund balance to support our operating budget annually; THIS IS NOT SUSTAINABLE. These funds will not replenish and will run dry. Reach out to the County Executive. Reach out to the County Council. Demand more funds for our schools and do not cut programs from our students.

I urge you to reconsider the proposed budget cuts and prioritize the needs of our students, educators, and future generations. Please consider alternative solutions that protect the quality of education in HCPSS and invest in the success of our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,


Samantha Norris

From: [Elana Fertig](#)
To: [Ball, Calvin](#); boe@hcpss.org; [CouncilMail](#); Bill_Barnes@hcpss.org; Stephen_Cowles@hcpss.org; Jerilyn_Johnson@hcpss.org; lauren_beaman@hcpss.org
Subject: Please reconsider HCPSS Budget Cuts
Date: Thursday, February 15, 2024 7:10:52 PM

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

Dear School Board Members,

I, a parents of students attending schools in the Howard County Public School System in District 1, are writing to express our deep concern regarding the proposed budget cuts, cuts to arts and music, gifted and talented, special ed programs, and increased class sizes. I strongly oppose any measures that would negatively impact the quality of education our children receive and that make our county so special.

As a parent to a 2E child, the programs available at Howard County are truly a beacon in the area and offer the only option to so many children that flock to our area due to the excellence our schools provide and unique resources. urge you to consider alternative solutions that do not compromise the quality of education our children receive or reduce the reputation of the Howard County region.

I believe that investing in education is an investment in our future and in the prosperity of our county, and hope that you will prioritize the needs of our students when making budget decisions.

I understand that budget cuts are necessary at times, but ask that you take into account the long-term effects of these decisions on our children's education. There must be other areas where cuts can be made without impacting the quality of education our children receive or alternatives to raise tax revenues to make up for this shortfall.

I appreciate your time and consideration of our concerns. I look forward to working together with you to find solutions that benefit our students and ensure their success.

Sincerely,

Elana Fertig
4963 Wharff Lane
Ellicott City, MD 21043

From: Jenelle Hinnant <jenellecooke21@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 15, 2024 2:09 PM
To: Ball, Calvin; boe@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; bill_barnes@hcpss.org
Subject: Urgent Concern: Proposed Budget Cuts and Their Impact on Our Schools

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Dear County Executives,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the proposed budget cuts for the 2025 fiscal year, as outlined on pages 21, 231-232 of the proposed budget document. The planned reductions, including but not limited to the elimination of the third-grade strings program, reduction of Gifted and Talented (GT) seminars, reduction of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for second grade, and an increase in class size, are both disappointing and wrong.

Our schools are:

- The pinnacle of this county.
- A reflection of our commitment to future generations.
- A significant factor in why many families choose to live and pay taxes here.

It is disheartening to see proposals that would directly undermine the quality of education and the well-being of our students. Schools in our county are already operating with stretched resources, and further cuts could exacerbate existing challenges, affecting academic achievement, curriculum quality, teacher-student ratios, student support services, safety, extracurricular activities, and overall resource allocation.

The implications of these budget cuts are far-reaching. Reducing funding for essential programs and increasing class sizes will not only compromise the quality of our children's education but also their prospects and the overall competitiveness of our community. An exceptional school system is a foundational pillar of a thriving community, contributing to its economic strength and social cohesion.

I understand the complexities of budget management and the necessity to make difficult decisions. However, investing in our schools is investing in the future of our county. Compromising on education is a loss for everyone involved - students, schools, families, and the broader community, including yourselves as our elected representatives. Your decisions today will have a lasting impact on the fabric of our community.

Therefore, I urge you to reconsider the proposed budget cuts and explore alternative solutions that do not sacrifice the quality of our educational system. Our families deserve schools that exemplify excellence in every facet, from academic achievements to extracurricular opportunities. I am confident that, with thoughtful deliberation and community input, we can find a path forward that upholds the standard of education our children deserve.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,
Jenelle Hinnant

Parent of students at Hammond Elementary and Atholton High School

From: [Jennifer Perry](#)
To: [Jennifer Perry](#)
Subject: HCPSS Budget Cuts: Parent Concern
Date: Thursday, February 15, 2024 2:13:12 PM

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

Dear School Board Members,

We, the parents of students attending schools in the Howard County Public School System in District 1, are writing to express our deep concern regarding the proposed budget cuts and increased class sizes. We strongly oppose any measures that would negatively impact the quality of education our children receive.

As parents, we understand the importance of smaller class sizes in providing a better learning experience for our children. We believe that increasing class sizes would make it more difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention to each student, resulting in a less effective learning environment. Furthermore, we are concerned that this would disproportionately affect students who are already struggling academically or come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We urge you to consider alternative solutions that do not compromise the quality of education our children receive. We believe that investing in education is an investment in our future, and we hope that you will prioritize the needs of our students when making budget decisions.

We understand that budget cuts are necessary at times, but we ask that you take into account the long-term effects of these decisions on our children's education. We believe that there are other areas where cuts can be made without impacting the quality of education our children receive.

We appreciate your time and consideration of our concerns. We look forward to working together with you to find solutions that benefit our students and ensure their success.

Sincerely,

Jennifer and Brooks Perry
5108 Britten Lane
Ellicott City, MD 21043

From: [Sarah Morad](#)
To: [Ball, Calvin](#); boe@hcpss.org; [CouncilMail](#); Bill_Barnes@hcpss.org; Stephen_Cowles@hcpss.org; Jerilyn_Johnson@hcpss.org; lauren_beaman@hcpss.org
Subject: Budget Cuts
Date: Thursday, February 15, 2024 2:15:30 PM

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

Dear School Board Members,

We, the parents of students attending schools in the Howard County Public School System in District 1, are writing to express our deep concern regarding the proposed budget cuts and increased class sizes. We strongly oppose any measures that would negatively impact the quality of education our children receive.

As parents, we understand the importance of smaller class sizes in providing a better learning experience for our children. We believe that increasing class sizes would make it more difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention to each student, resulting in a less effective learning environment. Furthermore, we are concerned that this would disproportionately affect students who are already struggling academically or come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We urge you to consider alternative solutions that do not compromise the quality of education our children receive. We believe that investing in education is an investment in our future, and we hope that you will prioritize the needs of our students when making budget decisions.

We understand that budget cuts are necessary at times, but we ask that you take into account the long-term effects of these decisions on our children's education. We believe that there are other areas where cuts can be made without impacting the quality of education our children receive.

We appreciate your time and consideration of our concerns. We look forward to working together with you to find solutions that benefit our students and ensure their success.

Sincerely,

Sarah Morad
5100 Crestwood Ln Ellicott City, MD 21043

--

From: Vicky Bernal <vickylbernal@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 15, 2024 2:10 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: HCPSS Proposed Budget Cuts

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Dear Council Members:

I am writing to encourage you to work with the Howard County Public School System to adequately fund our schools. This year millions of dollars in cuts have been proposed that will greatly impact our school system. I am very concerned about the proposal to eliminate over three hundred existing positions. Our schools are already stretched so far. It is unfair to ask our teachers and staff to continue to do more with less funding and support. If we want Howard County to be a desirable place to live then we must make education a priority.

Vicky Bernal
5801 Lois Lane
Ellicott City, MD 21043

From: [Jennifer Perry](#)
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: Fwd: HCPSS Budget Cuts: Parent Concern
Date: Friday, February 16, 2024 12:53:35 PM

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

Dear School Board Members,

We, the parents of students attending schools in the Howard County Public School System in District 1, are writing to express our deep concern regarding the proposed budget cuts and increased class sizes. We strongly oppose any measures that would negatively impact the quality of education our children receive.

As parents, we understand the importance of smaller class sizes in providing a better learning experience for our children. We believe that increasing class sizes would make it more difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention to each student, resulting in a less effective learning environment. Furthermore, we are concerned that this would disproportionately affect students who are already struggling academically or come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We urge you to consider alternative solutions that do not compromise the quality of education our children receive. We believe that investing in education is an investment in our future, and we hope that you will prioritize the needs of our students when making budget decisions.

We understand that budget cuts are necessary at times, but we ask that you take into account the long-term effects of these decisions on our children's education. We believe that there are other areas where cuts can be made without impacting the quality of education our children receive.

We appreciate your time and consideration of our concerns. We look forward to working together with you to find solutions that benefit our students and ensure their success.

Sincerely,

Jennifer and Brooks Perry
5108 Britten Lane
Ellicott City, MD 21043

--

- Jen Perry

From: [Natalie Barg](#)
To: [Ball, Calvin](#); boe@hcpss.org; [CouncilMail](#); Bill_Barnes@hcpss.org; Stephen_Cowles@hcpss.org; Jerilyn_Johnson@hcpss.org; lauren_beaman@hcpss.org
Subject: HCPSS Concerns
Date: Friday, February 16, 2024 10:29:24 AM

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

Dear HCPSS Council Members,

We, the parents of students attending schools in the Howard County Public School System in District 1, are writing to express our deep concern regarding the proposed budget cuts and increased class sizes. We strongly oppose any measures that would negatively impact the quality of education our children receive.

As parents, we understand the importance of smaller class sizes in providing a better learning experience for our children. We believe that increasing class sizes would make it more difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention to each student, resulting in a less effective learning environment. Furthermore, we are concerned that this would disproportionately affect students who are already struggling academically or come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We urge you to consider alternative solutions that do not compromise the quality of education our children receive. We believe that investing in education is an investment in our future, and we hope that you will prioritize the needs of our students when making budget decisions.

We understand that budget cuts are necessary at times, but we ask that you take into account the long-term effects of these decisions on our children's education. We believe that there are other areas where cuts can be made without impacting the quality of education our children receive.

We appreciate your time and consideration of our concerns. We look forward to working together with you to find solutions that benefit our students and ensure their success.

Sincerely,
Natalie Barg
8528 Timberland Circle
Ellicott City MD 21043

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Ali York](#)
To: [Ball, Calvin](#); [lauren.beaman@hcpss.org](#); [boe@hcpss.org](#); [CouncilMail](#); [Bill.Barnes@hcpss.org](#); [Stephen.Cowles@hcpss.org](#); [Jerilyn.Johnson@hcpss.org](#)
Subject: Proposed Budget Cuts
Date: Saturday, February 17, 2024 2:37:42 PM

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

To Whom It May Concern:

We, the parents of students attending schools in the Howard County Public School System in District 1, are writing to express our deep concern regarding the proposed budget cuts and increased class sizes. We strongly oppose any measures that would negatively impact the quality of education our children receive.

As parents, we understand the importance of smaller class sizes in providing a better learning experience for our children. We believe that increasing class sizes would make it more difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention to each student, resulting in a less effective learning environment. Furthermore, we are concerned that this would disproportionately affect students who are already struggling academically or come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We urge you to consider alternative solutions that do not compromise the quality of education our children receive. We believe that investing in education is an investment in our future, and we hope that you will prioritize the needs of our students when making budget decisions.

We understand that budget cuts are necessary at times, but we ask that you take into account the long-term effects of these decisions on our children's education. We believe that there are other areas where cuts can be made without impacting the quality of education our children receive.

We appreciate your time and consideration of our concerns. We look forward to working together with you to find solutions that benefit our students and ensure their success.

Sincerely,

Ali York | 7929 James Ave | Ellicott City, MD 21043

From: Kate Copanic <kate@copanic.net>
Sent: Saturday, February 17, 2024 9:55 AM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Please adequately fund our schools

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Dear Council Members:

I encourage you to increase the money provided to the Howard County Public School System so that cuts in current levels of services do not need to be made. Many of us moved here for the great school system and want to keep it that way. The thought of increasing already large class sizes and losing programs is devastating. Please fully fund the school's requests.

Kate Copanic

From: [Katie Epley](#)
To: [Ball, Calvin](#); boe@hcpss.org; [CouncilMail](#); Bill_Barnes@hcpss.org; Stephen_Cowles@hcpss.org; Jerilyn_Johnson@hcpss.org; lauren_beaman@hcpss.org
Subject: Budget Concerns
Date: Sunday, February 18, 2024 8:46:30 AM

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

Dear School Board Members,

We, the parents of students attending schools in the Howard County Public School System in District 1, are writing to express our deep concern regarding the proposed budget cuts and increased class sizes. We strongly oppose any measures that would negatively impact the quality of education our children receive.

As parents, we understand the importance of smaller class sizes in providing a better learning experience for our children. We believe that increasing class sizes would make it more difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention to each student, resulting in a less effective learning environment. Furthermore, we are concerned that this would disproportionately affect students who are already struggling academically or come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We are also deeply concerned about the lack of teacher resources for our children. Increasing class sizes would make it more difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention to each student, resulting in a less effective learning environment. Furthermore, we are concerned about the safety of our children in overcrowded classrooms, where there is no space for engaging activities as desks would fill the entire space.

We are also worried about the proposed cuts to the arts, particularly music. Music is an essential part of our children's education, and cutting this program would have a significant impact on their academic experience. We believe that investing in the arts is crucial to our children's development and should not be sacrificed due to budget constraints.

We urge you to consider alternative solutions that do not compromise the quality of education our children receive. We believe that investing in education is an investment in our future, and we hope that you will prioritize the needs of our students when making budget decisions.

We understand that budget cuts are necessary at times, but we ask that you take into account the long-term effects of these decisions on our children's education. We believe that there are other areas where cuts can be made without impacting the quality of education our children receive.

We appreciate your time and consideration of our concerns. We look forward to working together with you to find solutions that benefit our students and ensure their success.

Sincerely,

Katie Epley

7505 Quiet Shade Lane

Ellicott City, MD 21043

443-812-9224

From: [Rachel Molitor](#)
To: [Ball, Calvin](#); boe@hcpss.org; [CouncilMail](#); Bill_Barnes@hcpss.org; Stephen_Cowles@hcpss.org; Jerilyn_Johnson@hcpss.org; lauren_beaman@hcpss.org
Subject: HCPSS Budget Cuts
Date: Sunday, February 18, 2024 11:31:14 PM

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

Dear School Board Members,

As one of many parents of students attending schools in the Howard County Public School System, I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the proposed budget cuts and increased class sizes. I strongly oppose the proposed measures that would negatively impact the quality of education our children receive, while also making the jobs of the teachers even more challenging and draining.

As a parent, I am deeply concerned about the lack of teacher resources for the children. Increasing class sizes while also cutting additional jobs for supportive personnel would make it more difficult and seemingly impossible for teachers to provide individualized attention to each student, resulting in a less effective learning environment. Furthermore, there are safety concerns about the kids in overcrowded classrooms, and also no space for engaging activities since the desks would fill the entire space.

I am also worried about the proposed cuts to the arts, particularly music. So often the arts are looked at as an unnecessary item in the budget and are amongst the first things to be discussed in budget cuts when it is so vital to so many - providing a more comprehensive education, lighting up kids brains in ways other classes may not do, and music can set kids on a path that has potential to change the trajectory of their lives. I was involved in the school band through high school and it has a lasting effect in my life. Music is an essential part of our children's education, and cutting this program would have a significant impact on their academic experience. We believe that investing in the arts is crucial to our children's development and should not be sacrificed due to budget constraints.

I urge you to consider alternative solutions that do not compromise the quality of education our children receive. I believe that investing in education is an investment in our future, and I hope that you will prioritize the needs of our students when making budget decisions.

I understand that budget cuts are necessary at times, but ask that you take into account the long-term effects of these decisions on our children's education. I believe that there are other areas where cuts can be made without impacting the quality of education our children receive, and also making good teachers that care about their students and their jobs want to quit.

I appreciate your time and consideration of our concerns. I look forward to working together with you to find solutions that benefit our students and ensure their success.

Sincerely,

Rachel Molitor
4915 Ilchester Point Court
Ellicott City, MD 21043

From: Scott Epley <swe106@hotmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 18, 2024 8:46 AM
To: Ball, Calvin; boe@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; Bill_Barnes@hcpss.org; Stephen_Cowles@hcpss.org; Jerilyn_Johnson@hcpss.org; lauren_beaman@hcpss.org
Subject: HCPSS Budget Concerns

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Dear School Board Members,

We, the parents of students attending schools in the Howard County Public School System in District 1, are writing to express our deep concern regarding the proposed budget cuts and increased class sizes. We strongly oppose any measures that would negatively impact the quality of education our children receive.

As parents, we understand the importance of smaller class sizes in providing a better learning experience for our children. We believe that increasing class sizes would make it more difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention to each student, resulting in a less effective learning environment. Furthermore, we are concerned that this would disproportionately affect students who are already struggling academically or come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We are also deeply concerned about the lack of teacher resources for our children. Increasing class sizes would make it more difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention to each student, resulting in a less effective learning environment. Furthermore, we are concerned about the safety of our children in overcrowded classrooms, where there is no space for engaging activities as desks would fill the entire space.

We are also worried about the proposed cuts to the arts, particularly music. Music is an essential part of our children's education, and cutting this program would have a significant impact on their academic experience. We believe that investing in the arts is crucial to our children's development and should not be sacrificed due to budget constraints. We urge you to consider alternative solutions that do not compromise the quality of education our children receive. We believe that investing in education is an investment in our future, and we hope that you will prioritize the needs of our students when making budget decisions.

We understand that budget cuts are necessary at times, but we ask that you take into account the long-term effects of these decisions on our children's education. We believe that there are other areas where cuts can be made without impacting the quality of education our children receive.

We appreciate your time and consideration of our concerns. We look forward to working together with you to find solutions that benefit our students and ensure their success.

Sincerely,

Scott Epley

7505 Quiet Shade Lane

Ellicott City, MD 21043

443-803-6143

From: Hari Easwaran <Heaswar2@jhmi.edu>
Sent: Monday, February 19, 2024 9:25 PM
To: Ball, Calvin; boe@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; Bill_Barnes@hcpss.org; Stephen_Cowles@hcpss.org; Jerilyn_Johnson@hcpss.org; lauren_beaman@hcpss.org
Subject: Regarding HCPSS Budget Cuts

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Dear School Board Members,

We, the parents of students attending schools in the Howard County Public School System in District 1, are writing to express our deepest concern regarding the proposed budget cuts and increased class sizes. We strongly oppose any measures that would negatively impact the quality of education our children receive.

As parents, we understand the importance of smaller class sizes in providing a better learning experience for our children. We believe that increasing class sizes would make it more difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention to each student, resulting in a less effective learning environment. Furthermore, we are concerned that this would disproportionately affect students who are already struggling academically or come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We urge you to consider alternative solutions that do not compromise the quality of education our children receive. We believe that investing in education is an investment in our future, and we hope that you will prioritize the needs of our students when making budget decisions.

We understand that budget cuts are necessary at times, but we ask that you take into account the long-term effects of these decisions on our children's education. We believe that there are other areas where cuts can be made without impacting the quality of education our children receive.

We appreciate your time and consideration of our concerns. We look forward to working together with you to find solutions that benefit our students and ensure their success.

Sincerely,

Hari Easwaran
5004 Ellis Lane
Ellicott City
MD 21043

Hariharan Easwaran, PhD
Associate Professor
The Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center
The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Bunting/Blaustein Cancer Research Building 1
1650 Orleans Street
Room 5M44
Baltimore, MD 21287
Tel1: 410-502-9591
Tel2: 410-955-8506
Fax: 410-614-9884
GPS address: 1651 Jefferson St, Baltimore, MD 21205

From: Jmorgan G Mail <jmorgan.lehrer@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 19, 2024 12:35 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Help

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to you in response to the millions of dollars in proposed cuts to the Howard County Public School system budget. These cuts will severely impact our schools. Many of the cuts we are facing are due to the mandates in the Blueprint for Education. Although these mandates will bring many wonderful things to our system local county governments cannot afford to implement these positive changes without cutting important services. I implore you, our state officials, to provide more funding to the county school systems so that the Blueprint ideals can be achieved without sacrificing our current system.

Jesse Lehrer Kaplan

Sent from my iPhone

From: Katie Sivak <katie.m.sivak@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 20, 2024 11:28 AM
To: executive; CouncilMail
Subject: Budget for 2024 - 2025- DO BETTER FOR THE KDS

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Hello

I am writing in regards to the budget for 2024-2025.

We moved here from Illinois in 2021 and the #1 reason we decided to move to where we did for the schools. What I am hearing is that there is so much on the line for next year's school and taking more away from the kids and it just is not fair.

These kids have lost so much already due to covid and now they may lose more because of adults not able to budget correctly.

We pay taxes and they should be allocated to our community and our children.

The GT programs, summer school programs, orchestra are very important to our family and urge you to protect these programs.

We need small classes for the kids to be able to learn and be heard in class, again we pay taxes and should not have to send our kids to schools that are overcrowded. Please do not increase class size.

I also heard that the school field trips are going to be cut- these kids barely get any real life experience and to grow relationships outside of the class/learning.

It saddens me we are in this position, especially when we hear how much we spend on the bus systems.

Katie Sivak
Concerned Parent

From: Jessica Estrogano <jessica.estrogano@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 21, 2024 12:13 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Proposed FY2025 HCPSS Budget

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Dear Council Members,

I am a concerned parent of a first grader at Jeffers Hill Elementary School writing to work with the Howard County Public School System to adequately fund our schools. This year millions of dollars in cuts have been proposed that will greatly impact our school system. Howard County Public Schools have long been considered one of the country's best school systems and we need to make providing our children with a safe, world-class education a priority. I care deeply about the environment in which my child is learning, and I hope you feel and will act in the same way.

It is important that class size ratios are not increased. This would be detrimental to all students and staff. Larger classrooms result in less individualized attention from the teachers, lend themselves to a more disruptive environment because there are more students to manage, and mean less participation by students in group discussions. In schools with rooms that are already space-limited with even 18-20 children, adding in two more children and possibly more aides along with them, is too big a burden to bear. For children with special needs, the problems caused by classroom overpopulation is drastically magnified and it is important that personal aids for students receiving special education services are not eliminated. There is already a vast shortage of aides in this area, causing disruption to the classroom and stress for all children and staff.

Howard County is the wealthiest county in Maryland (1) and the seventh wealthiest county in the country (2). It is the responsibility of the County Executive to provide our children with great schools. We cannot afford to have even one politician in Howard County that does not do these things, and that instead uses children to fix budget gaps because children cannot advocate for themselves. I vote accordingly and urge my friends, neighbors, family, and other contacts to do the same.

Please do not force our children to absorb the budget cuts that should be made to other areas such as adding housing, and the library/community center at Lakefront. We need to take care of what we have first with education as the priority, and then we can consider other items.

Respectfully,
Jessica Estrogano
443-404-8535
jessica.estrogano@gmail.com

(1) <https://propertyclub.nyc/article/richest-counties-in-maryland,11/20/2023>

(2) <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/slideshows/richest-counties-in-america,12/20/2023>

From: Lori Ann Suffredini <lorisuffredini@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 21, 2024 11:51 AM
To: executive; CouncilMail
Subject: Proposed HCPSS program cuts for 2025

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

[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 the Howard County Council,

I am writing because I think it is important that you ask for the money needed to maintain our current level of services in the HCPSS and comply with the new Blueprint for Education mandates. If we want to continue to have one of the nation's best school systems, we need the money to make it a priority.

We cannot afford to cut resources to gifted and talented programs. These are the programs that make the Howard county school system stand out and give our children an advantage compared to children in area private schools. We also cannot afford to expand class sizes by two more children; at 24 kids in my first grader's class, it cannot be any larger. You cannot expect the teachers to be able to teach a group that large in an effective manner. Children will inevitably be left behind.

Additionally, our county cannot cut any resources for special education programs. Our county is known for the excellent education and assistance we can give to these children; cutting funding for any of these resources will negatively impact the educational experience for these children.

It is imperative that we ask for more funding for our county so as not to lose the services we offer. Our children will suffer if we do.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lori Suffredini

Mother of two current Bushy Park Elementary School students (Anthony Suffredini, 2nd grade; Regina Suffredini, first grade) and two future Bushy Park students

From: Matt Watkins <mjwatkins2@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 21, 2024 9:51 PM
To: executive; CouncilMail
Subject: Help

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

To the Howard County Executive and Council,

Like many of your constituents I am disheartened and disappointed in the current HCPSS budget issues resulting in increased class sizes and cuts to important programs. One of the reasons my family moved to Howard County last year was that the quality of schools was assumed to be excellent, and now I fear my assumption was incorrect. The issues we are experiencing are not the issues we should expect in a top-rated district, and that is what we should strive to be.

Please help us. Help the county. Allocate more money to HCPSS so that HOCO continues to be known for its excellent schools. Education is the root of success and will surely lead to economic prosperity for the county as well.

Please do not blame the state for funding issues. We are one of the richest counties in the United States and YOU can find a way to solve this problem locally. Let the state have its own problems -- raise taxes on us, if you must, to solve this problem which is in your hands. This is up to you. Rise to meet the challenge.

Sincerely,

Matt Watkins
HCPSS Parent

From: Torie Grant <toriegrant@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 21, 2024 7:24 AM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: HCPSS FY25 Operating Budget Cuts

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Dear Council Members,

My name is Dr. Torie Grant and I am a board-certified pediatrician. I am also the mother of three children in Howard County. I am reaching out to you in response to the millions of dollars in budget cuts proposed to the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) FY25 Operating Budget. <https://www.hcpss.org/about-us/budgets/fy25/>

The proposed budget cuts are sweeping and include, but are not limited to, an increase in class sizes at all grade levels, cuts to elementary music programs, cuts to STEM programs at all grade levels, and a reduction in services for children receiving special education support. Increasing class sizes, reducing special education support, and cutting many of the programs (particularly 3rd grade strings, elementary GT CEUs and seminars, BSAP and GT summer programs, and MESA) disproportionately affects low-income students and students from minoritized communities. Low-income families do not have the same resources to provide additional support for students with special needs, early or private music lessons, or STEM enrichment/exposure outside of school. It is our responsibility to ensure all of these enrichment programs are provided to every student in our public schools.

Howard County needs to continue to be a place that helps families with young children rise out of poverty. If allowed to pass in its current form, HCPSS FY25 Operating Budget would increase the already high educational achievement gap between low-income and high-income households.

My spouse and I both grew up in public school systems and moved to Howard County so our children could attend public schools which offer a world-class education to *all* children. Strong schools are the foundation of a strong community. Allowing these budget cuts to pass would be detrimental to our diverse and vibrant community and may cause families to leave HCPSS and Howard County in search of better resources for their children.

I urge you, our elected Howard County Council Members, to urgently provide more funding to the HCPSS BOE and to request more funding from the County Executive and State of Maryland Senate and House of Delegates so that the Blueprint goals can be implemented without causing harm to our current students and world-class school system.

I know you are all advocates for education and the underserved. We need to discuss how we can avoid these changes.

Respectfully,

Torie Grant, MD, MHS

From: [Alison Hickman](#)
To: [BoE Email](#); superintendent@hcpss.org
Cc: [CouncilMail](#); [Ball, Calvin](#)
Subject: Please request the full budget amount necessary
Date: Thursday, February 22, 2024 8:13:35 PM

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

Dear HCPSS leadership,

Keeping it brief but adding my voice to those who are requesting that HCPSS request the full budget amount necessary and the council in turn do what is necessary to fund it.

It is my hope as a taxpayer and parent that the council and Dr. Ball (copied here) raise tax rates, lower non need-based, exemptions and/or focus expenditures as necessary to fund the school system at the level we need and request as constituents. In my neighborhood of homes built originally in 1979 we are adding new students at nearly every home sale - families come here because education is valued but in recent years I think we've wavered when tough choices have to be made and at times we are losing sight of staying true to what makes our area such a compelling one to raise a family.

It makes no sense in one of the richest counties in the country that we are focused on doing things like increasing class sizes.

I could split this email into a separate one - one to HCPSS and one to the county but the only way we will navigate this is through partnership and collaboration- in that spirit I am sending this note to all and am hopeful that we will collectively prioritize what is necessary to maintain our value proposition as a county that excels in supporting students, teachers and families.

Best,
Alison Hickman
Clemens Crossing
301-580-5442

From: Ashley McCurdy <ashleylynnmccurdy@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2024 2:27 PM
To: Ball, Calvin; boe@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; bill_barnes@hcpss.org
Subject: Urgent Appeal for HCPSS funding

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Dear Dr. Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Acting-Superintendent Barnes,

I hope this letter finds you well. As a proud parent of a music-loving student, I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS).

It is shocking to see the report in the Baltimore Sun regarding so many cuts to positions in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

I also want to email to remind our elected officials that music education, in all of its forms, plays a pivotal role in shaping well-rounded individuals, fostering creativity, discipline, and teamwork. My child's involvement in music in Howard County schools has not only enriched their academic experience but has also contributed to their overall personal development.

Research consistently highlights the positive impact of music education on academic performance. Students engaged in music often show improved cognitive skills, better concentration, and enhanced problem-solving abilities. These benefits extend beyond the music room and positively influence their academic achievements.

Furthermore, our Gold Standard music programs contribute to building a sense of community within our schools. The collaborative nature of musical ensembles teaches students the value of teamwork, discipline, and perseverance. These qualities are essential not only in their academic journey but also in their future careers.

I understand the budgetary challenges that HCPSS faces, but I urge you to consider the invaluable contribution that music programs make to our students' lives. By investing more in HCPSS overall as a county, we are investing in the future leaders, artists, and innovators of our community.

I kindly request that you work together to solve any proposed cuts to music funding and continue to support ***all programs*** that are considered well-managed and *essential* in our county.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Ashley McCurdy
ashleylynnmccurdy@gmail.com
410-916-7906

From: Libby Wysocki <elizabeth.wysocki@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2024 11:27 AM
To: Ball, Calvin; boe@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; bill_barnes@hcpss.org
Subject: FIX THE HCPSS BUDGET!!

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Dear Dr. Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Acting-Superintendent Barnes,

I am a parent of two elementary school children at Worthington Elementary School. We decided to settle in Howard County because of the wonderful school system. One of our daughters has an IEP in place and has struggled with writing and math tremendously due to her ADHD and dysgraphia. She is finally, slowly making progress this year, due to her amazing teacher, Caitlyn Andersen, and special educators, led by Katie Murdza. The budget cuts to special education positions and discussion of class size increases are very troubling to me. We need MORE resources in our schools, not less. I volunteer at the school every week and see the strain on resources and cannot imagine it getting worse and not better. The teachers in this county is what makes this county and this school system amazing and getting the education from the start is crucial to success later in life. I already feel like I am doing so much for my daughter outside of school and it still isn't enough. I truly worry how it will affect her later in life, especially if she gets lost in a large class or the school does not have the resources for more one-on-one instruction.

The elimination of the strings music program in elementary school is also very troubling. Music education, in all of its forms, plays a pivotal role in shaping well-rounded individuals, fostering creativity, discipline, and teamwork. Music helps my daughter think clearer and see things differently. I am hopeful through music my daughter can help manage her ADHD and anxiety but she won't have the chance if this program is eliminated.

As an accountant at one of the top hedge funds, I understand budgetary challenges that HCPSS faces. We live in one of the richest counties in America. I feel that there are other ways the budget can be rearranged so that our students, the next generation of voters, do not suffer and can grow up to get the superior education that we moved here for them to get.

I implore you to work together to solve any proposed cuts to the music funding, special education resources, and class size increases. Please support ALL PROGRAMS that are considered well-managed and ESSENTIAL in our county.

Thank you,
Elizabeth Wysocki
4545 Chews Vineyard, Ellicott City, MD
610-213-2793

From: Jaclyn Fuchs <jaclynfuchs1@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2024 12:54 PM
To: budgetfeedback@hcpss.org; BoE Email; executive; CouncilMail
Cc: katiefry.hester@senate.state.md.us; Watson, Courtney Delegate
Subject: Objection to HCPSS Budget proposal

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Dear Mr. Barnes, BOE, and State Officials,

Similar to so many other parents, grandparents, teachers, and community members, I strongly oppose the plan to increase class size by 2 students and make significant cuts to staffing. While the number 2 does not seem like much, it will certainly bust the balloon (which honestly has already burst). Physically, adding 2 more students to already overcrowded classrooms is not safely possible. My 4th grade daughter's class is tight. They have just enough room to provide some level of personal space (although I wish it were more). My daughter was recently hit in the nose by a kid swinging his water bottle due to the lack a space. Dunloggin Middle is so overcrowded you can't even get down the hallway during class change and children are being injured (as was my neighbor's son). Moreso, adding 2 more kids to already overcrowded younger grades is unfathomable and simply destructive. I have walked into my 1st grader's classroom and to say it was chaos is an understatement. The teacher was struggling to manage the numerous kids she had which is so hard at this grade level. I can't imagine adding 2 more. Further, the adjoining proposal to simultaneously cut staff further exacerbates these problems.

Mr. Barnes, you have not considered the cumulative impact of your plan when assessing the impact of both proposals nor considered the baseline status in either or both of these proposals. This proposal is antiquated in its approach and could be considered Draconian in nature when one considers the devastating impacts on the students and teachers.

I appreciate the budget struggle you are under but your proposal is not the answer. I strongly urge HCPSS to stop proposing these outdated means by which to address budget issues and start thinking outside the box. Find other means by which to save money that are not targeted at the teachers and students. Evaluate where money could be saved by improving the efficiency and reducing waste of contracts and programs already in place. Lobby for more funding from all those that you can, especially in light of the state level requirements you are facing. Be a leader of novel, inventive school improvement initiatives, not a contributor to downfall of Howard County schools. We moved to Howard County for the school system but are now seriously considering private education. Spending money on private education was not planned and we will suffer; however, we are being forced to consider this due to the middle school conditions we are facing and now proposals such as this.

Finally, Dunloggin needs to be demolished and rebuilt, now. I am seriously concerned for my child's safety and educational experience- she will be in 6th grade in fall 2025. Recently paint chips, likely lead-based given the school's age, have fallen from the ceiling and excessive, unsanitary rodent droppings have been found throughout the school. The school is already over capacity. Physically it is unsafe. The school has few windows, approx 54 kids (including girls starting menstruation) per toilet, and is falling apart in so many ways. I know you know this yet action has not only not been taken, a vote to rebuild the school was rescinded based on irresponsible misinformation. Please begin planning for the new school now using the funds available (I was present at a recent board meeting where they said there is some pot of money that can be used for architectural plans) so that when approved officially, ground can be broken immediately.

Again, I appreciate your job is difficult and you are facing many challenges. But the solution to those challenges can not be what you have proposed. The solutions must be innovative and most importantly, non-detrimental to the teachers and students.

Thank you for your time.

Jaclyn

Dear Council Members:

We are writing to encourage you to work with the Howard County Public School System to adequately fund our schools. This year millions of dollars in cuts have been proposed that will greatly impact our school system.

Our children are students at Swansfield Elementary and Clarksville Middle Schools. We believe it is important to maintain our current level of services and comply with the new Blueprint mandates. If we want to continue to have one of the country's best school systems, we need to make it a priority.

More specifically, we want to implore you not to cut funding for teachers, which will negatively impact class sizes, as well as funding for Elementary Gifted and Talented seminars and CEU's. GT seminars and CEU's are incredibly important programs that provide much needed enrichment, socialization, academic achievement, and set students up for future success.

Please reconsider funding these critically important programs and opportunities for our students.

Sincerely,
Jodi & David Dalpe

From: Jodi Dalpe <jodidalpe@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2024 10:36 AM
To: CouncilMail
Cc: Dave Dalpe
Subject: HCPSS Proposed Budget Cuts
Attachments: HCPSS Proposed budget cuts testimony.docx

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Please refer to our attached testimony.

Best,
David & Jodi Dalpe

Dear Council Members:

We are writing to encourage you to work with the Howard County Public School System to adequately fund our schools. This year millions of dollars in cuts have been proposed that will greatly impact our school system.

Our children are students at Swansfield Elementary and Clarksville Middle Schools. We believe it is important to maintain our current level of services and comply with the new Blueprint mandates. If we want to continue to have one of the country's best school systems, we need to make it a priority.

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Please reconsider funding these critically important programs and opportunities for our students.

Sincerely,
Jodi & David Dalpe

From: Joseph A. Quirk <Joseph_Quirk@hcpss.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2024 12:38 PM
To: executive
Cc: CouncilMail
Subject: Urgent Appeal: Howard County's Education System in Crisis (Skip to top 10 if you don't want to read, most people don't)

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Dear Howard County Reps,

As a dedicated educator and concerned parent in Howard County, I am compelled to address the pressing issue of budget cuts and their detrimental impact on our children's education. The current trajectory of increasing class sizes and understaffing is leading to a crisis that demands immediate attention and action from our county, school and state legislation.

To convey the urgency and gravity of the situation, I've compiled a succinct "Top 10 List" highlighting the profound repercussions of these budget cuts on our students, teachers, and the overall educational environment:

1. Increased class sizes are diminishing individualized attention, hindering student learning, and exacerbating disparities.
2. Overburdened teachers are facing unsustainable workloads, leading to burnout and attrition of talented educators.
3. Valuable resources and programs are being slashed, depriving students of essential academic and extracurricular opportunities.
4. Rising stress levels among educators and students are impeding classroom effectiveness and overall well-being.
5. Behavioral issues are escalating due to overcrowded classrooms and insufficient support systems.
6. Howard County's reputation as a premier education destination is at risk of tarnish, jeopardizing future opportunities for our youth.
7. The aftermath of COVID-19 has underscored the critical need for smaller class sizes to address learning loss and support mental health.
8. Strained teacher-student relationships are impacting academic engagement and achievement.
9. Skilled educators are seeking alternative career paths, leading to a loss of talent and experience within our schools.
10. Our children deserve better. It is our moral obligation to prioritize their education by adequately funding and supporting our schools.

I implore you to consider the profound implications of these budget cuts and take immediate action to prioritize the well-being and academic success of our students. Our community's future depends on it.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,
Joe Quirk
Physical Education Teacher
Hammond Elementary School
Joseph_Quirk@hcpss.org

From: Mary Zagar Brown <mzbrown@me.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2024 9:48 AM
To: executive; CouncilMail
Subject: School budget cuts

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

To County Executive Ball and members of the Howard County Council,

I am heartbroken over the number of proposed cuts I have seen in the superintendent's proposed budget and I want to make it clear that none of them are acceptable. I am writing to request the county provide enough money to our schools so these cuts are not necessary. I understand that state mandates are making it necessary to find ways to fund new programs, but helping kids in one area only to rob them in another is not going to do anyone any good.

We live in one of the wealthiest counties in the country. You don't need to drive far to see tons of massive houses on huge plots of land. The vast majority of people who move here do so because of the state-of-the-art public school system we supposedly offer. If we start cutting back to bare bones requirements in our school system, our public school system will lose what makes it special, and people will no longer choose to move here, and the lower-income families and elderly, long-term residents that benefit from the wealth around us will be left with a dilapidated, underfunded school system and an abandoned community... what we have seen happen in so many urban communities across the country.

Programs like GT, third grade strings, and related arts programs enrich our children's lives, challenge them, teach them how to plan and work hard, and help them to think outside the box. They make our school system exceptional, and they bring residents, business, and development. Also, increasing class size will be an incredible disservice to our students and teachers, serving only to burn out our best teachers and ensuring that students do not get the individualized support they need to succeed. In addition, most of our classrooms are simply not built to accommodate such large class sizes, leading to dangerous overcrowding in our classrooms.

I am begging the county to support our public school system, the heart of Howard County, so ALL our public school programs can continue and to keep us as a school district that is more than just bare bones, meeting only the most basic of requirements. So many of the people who live in Howard County have children and grandchildren who are in the public school system or will be in the public school system. They want it to continue as the exceptional public school system it is considered. Please represent us and stand up for that.

Thank you,
Mary Brown
HCPSS Parent and Howard County Homeowner, 21042

From: Nicole Oruncak <nicole.oruncak@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2024 12:00 PM
To: budgetfeedback@hcpss.org
Subject: Urgent overcrowding

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Good Morning,

I am writing in regards to new budget cuts that may result in our children's school classrooms overcapacity. I recently spent the afternoon in my daughters 4th & 2nd Grade classes at Northfield Elementary School. I am a room parent for each of my children. I was helping to host Valentine's Celebrations. As for the 2nd grade class with 24 Students, it was a struggle for both volunteers and her teacher to coordinate an activity with this class size. This class also has 3 special needs children with 2 helpers for those students. I can not imagine fitting one more desk inside but more so I can not imagine the strain on the teacher by adding just 1 more student into this classroom. We have to think of the impact on the teachers, student, special needs helpers, and on the school staff by adding more students. This would absolutely limit the ability to properly educate our children. I also think if the room was any fuller we have to think of safety as it limits the ability to move within the space both for teachers, helpers, and students. I witnessed a lot of struggle when one of the special needs children needed their interpreter and they could not get to them fast enough because of the space. I can't imagine if we had to implement a safety drill for real life because logistically it would be a nightmare to protect that many children in a live shooter situation. We have to think of these serious concerns in today's society.

Later that afternoon, I was in the 4th grade classroom with 27 students. With just the additional 3, the space felt squeezed and I was overwhelmed with the amount of children. I had a hard time remembering names and being able to assist 1 child without 3 more asking for help. We are doing a disservice to these children by stockpiling them into a classroom and expecting one teacher to be able to get to each individual child. Every child deserves an education and to be heard in the classroom. When you put 27 children into a classroom, voices get lost and teachers become overwhelmed. The schools in Howard County are already under strain with the enrollment numbers rising each year.

Those like myself who live in this county continue to see the rising in buildings and housing contracts but have yet to see new schools being built to help with the capacity issues that are widely straining all of the Howard County Schools at all levels. The board of education moves these children like pawns on a chess board with no regard to their personal, emotional, and learning ability under this strain of changing their neighborhood school and having to move into a new and unknown school. The board of education calls this redistricting and we parents call this our worst nightmare. We buy our homes taking into consideration that we will be with our neighbors and attending schools within walking distance of our homes and yet are forced to be moved and bussed out of our neighborhood into a more distant school. This adds stain to the child and parent resulting in unnecessary safety concerns of putting walkers on busses, adding more busses on the roads which also increases the risk of accidents. There have been 2 accidents, that I know of, in Howard County already this year not to mention the complete mess of bussing in the beginning of the school year. Adding more children to the school only increases the bus capacity and increases safety risk.

We need to protect our children's rights to attend schools that can properly support them with their education and keep them safe. They need to feel valued and not treated like cattle in the classrooms by adding more children to fill to capacity. These children and their families deserve to be given a fair voice in these decisions which have recently destroyed neighborhoods including my own, Dorsey Hall. We have spilt up Dorsey cutting our community in half by the

last redistricting. We are on completely different schedules which affects our children's ability to play with their own neighborhood friends. This also impacts the ability of the community to provide support of one another with different schools meaning different schedules. The strain that The Board of Education has put onto our teachers and parents to maintain capacity just to pass another development to be built like the one on 108 is beyond comprehension. 108 and Columbia Rd is currently under construction which was originally planned for 50+ living but after the last redistricting the capacity numbers fell low enough that now we are seeing an approval for more family townhomes. How convenient this is for builders and contractors but at what cost to the schools who will now be pushed over capacity again. This cycle needs to stop! We can't keep shuffling children and their families to lower capacity numbers because the ones who pay the biggest cost are our next generation who are being slighted an education so as to fill some contractors pockets. Please help to keep the capacity numbers where they are because they are already to high, we can only do so much as parents as you have the power in your hands to make the change.

From: Lauren Pearlman <lpearlman@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 23, 2024 11:23 AM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: budget feedback

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Dear Council Members:

I am writing to encourage you to work with the Howard County Public School System to adequately fund our schools. This year millions of dollars in cuts have been proposed that will greatly impact our school system. It is important not to cut class size rations, 6th grade team building activities, elementary G&T seminars and curriculum extension units, and custodial positions, among others. Small class sizes are what make HoCO schools shine. The 6th grade team building activity was a key building block of my son's experience in middle school. And my youngest benefits from G&T seminars and extension units. Not to mention the extra burden placed on custodial staff if positions are eliminated.

Thank you,
Lauren Pearlman, HCPS parent

From: Sarah Stark Casagrande <s.stark.casagrande@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 23, 2024 2:26 PM
To: executive; CouncilMail
Subject: HCPSS Budget

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

Hello,

I am writing to express my concern over potential budget cuts to HCPSS.

As the mother of a 4th grade elementary student, I know well that class size matters. Teachers cannot effectively teach when class sizes are too large. Small group instruction becomes impossible and students, whether performing below, at, or above grade level lose out on education.

GT teachers cannot be lost. At a large school such as Fulton Elementary, at least 2 GE teachers are needed to teach 2 GT math classes at the same time (both 4th and 5th grades have two FULL GT math classes that need to be taught at the same time). In addition, the CEU's are important additions to the curriculum. My daughter complains that social studies or science in her regular homeroom are boring; the CEUs help for at least part of the year.

Students in special ed or IEPs need their support systems. Every student loses out on education when these services are cut.

Please do not make these budget cuts that will certainly reduce the quality of education in HCPSS.

Sarah Casagrande

February 26, 2024

Dear HCPSS Board of Education;

It is with very mixed emotions – disappointment, frustration, and even anger – that I write today. Disappointment that HCPSS has decided to ask Howard County Council not for what it NEEDS to make our schools successful, but for what it thinks it can get from the County to keep the lights on and the doors open in our schools. Frustration, because you are once again considering cutting important programs like GT courses for elementary schools, music programs like 3rd grade strings, academic supports for math and reading, para-educators, and, worst of all, considering increasing class sizes above the already high 30 students per classroom. Anger, because all of these cuts will harm, not help our students, and make Howard County a less desirable place to raise a family.

Our society likes to treat so many things like pie. Education should not be treated like pie, though you are going to be told by the Acting Superintendent and the Central Office staff that any cut not made HAS to be offset somewhere else, pitting school communities against each other as they try to save and justify funding their own programs. As another parent said in a conversation, it's very Dickensian and definitely NOT a good way to run a school system. Making the cuts I highlight below – or other cuts not noted here – are really just short term band-aids and will only make our school system, and our county, poorer in both the short-term and the long-term.

(1) Increasing class sizes is detrimental to student learning. Per the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), evidence demonstrates that reducing class size, particularly for younger children, has a positive effect on student achievement overall and an especially significant impact on the education of disadvantaged children, as also noted in a 2012 study by Brookings. The US Government Accountability Office (GAO) found in 2022 that, among other things, strategies like smaller class sizes and better links between schools and families can help address the negative effect the pandemic had on academic progress (see [GAO-22-105816](#)).

The AFT further notes that optimal class sizes are 15-19 students. However, HCPSS class sizes are in the low-to-mid 20s for K-2; 26-30 students per class for grades 3-5; and between 20-33 in a classroom for middle and high school classes. These numbers put HCPSS classrooms, particularly for elementary students, at almost twice the optimal level. Some teachers have noted in conversations that with 30-33 students in their high school classes, they can barely fit all of their students into their classrooms. Given that, how do you expect to shoehorn additional students into already crowded classrooms? Even youth organizations like Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts look for a 1:6 or 1:8 ratio for adults to Scouts (slightly higher for older Scouts), not only for safety purposes but to ensure the Scouts receive adequate attention and support.

(2) HCPSS doesn't have the greatest reputation for providing services to Twice Exceptional (2E) students - gifted children who have the characteristics of gifted students with the potential for high achievement and give evidence of one or more disabilities as defined by

federal or state eligibility criteria. But some of the very programs you are looking to cut – GT (gifted and talented), and various “non mandated” special education programs like reading and math supports – are the programs that make school a positive learning environment for our 2E students. GT programs open up new routes of inquiry and thinking for our youngest learners.

Our elementary school offers GT programs like Brain Busters in 2nd grade, where my child got to work on logic and other puzzles requiring critical thinking. This year, my child is doing our school’s Zam’s Quest GT program, looking at endangered species from different angles, like conservationists vs. farmers vs. poachers. For a child like mine who struggles with writing, but is very creative and loves to look at problems from different angles to puzzle things out, these courses have really made school and learning enjoyable. Depending on how it’s presented, my child absorbs information like a sponge, but the “traditional” ways of learning the “Three Rs” does not work as well for them because of the way their brain is wired. Programs like GT provide children like mine with different, non-traditional ways to learn; without these programs, my child and others like them are going to struggle, possibly end up hating school, and not succeed like they can with more whole-child approaches. Trying to shoehorn everyone back into a rigid educational structure when we know better and can do better is completely foolish and will set HCPSS, Maryland, and our country up for failure.

(3) One of the courses you are contemplating cutting is 3rd grade strings. While it may not seem like much – it’s only a year, right? – music is a language, and studies have shown that the younger we are when we learn a language, the easier it is to learn it and to retain it. Third grade strings not only introduces 8 & 9 year olds to playing an instrument, but also to a variety of skills that translate directly back to the classroom: responsibility (caring for an instrument), team work/cooperation (playing in a group), concentration, and mathematical concepts (counting, fractions, etc). Learning to play a stringed instrument has been a HUGE motivator for my child this year, as it provides an enjoyable educational pathway for them when other aspects of school have been more challenging at times (they have a 504).

Our elementary school held it’s winter orchestra concert in mid-January. The beginner orchestra of 89 students (mostly 3rd graders) was particularly impressive for how well they all played together, despite only having two rehearsals in two weeks as a full orchestra (all other rehearsals are group lessons by instrument – violin, viola, and cello). These young students are a shining example of hard work and dedication. To take this opportunity away from future HCPSS 3rd graders would be to the students’ detriment, especially as so many in society complain that kids don’t listen or are irresponsible. The music made by our elementary students that Thursday night was a testament to not only their wonderful strings teacher (whom all of the kids adore) but also to the students’ own hard work and dedication.

(4) Finally, I want to speak up on behalf of our para-educators and our school-family liaison staff. Our para-educators do so much with so little. It was raised at a previous Board meeting that our paras lack laptops to plan lessons and to do sensitive paperwork regarding student performance. Not only do the lack of computers present unacceptable

security risks for private student information, but it puts a financial burden on some of our most underpaid staff. Our paras play key roles in ensuring our already full classrooms function smoothly. And now HCPSS wants to not only increase class sizes but cut the number of paras? Wow. This is just so incredibly short sighted. Increasing classrooms while decreasing classroom support in the form of paras is going to increase teacher burnout, leading to an even greater exodus of experienced teachers, which is the last thing HCPSS or any US school system can afford.

Additionally, the stress on our non-English speaking students and their families will increase if we cut our school liaison staff. These liaisons provide important translation and other services to our students and families for whom English is not their first language. These liaisons help to develop a positive relationship between school and many students' families.

I could go on, but I hope you truly realize how integral ALL of the programs identified for reductions truly are to ensuring HCPSS is a thriving, world-class school system. Slowly picking it apart piece by piece in service to a budget seems so short sighted. You were all elected to be advocates for our schools, students, and staff. Please BE those advocates. Advocate to Council and to our State Delegation for full funding for not only the new Blueprint mandates but also our existing programs. While existing programs may not all be legal requirements, it doesn't mean they lack value or that they aren't necessary. Please do the right thing and advocate for FULL FUNDING for HCPSS for 2024-2025.

Sincerely,

Bethann Snyder,
Elkridge, District 1

Cc: County Executive Calvin Ball
Council Member Liz Walsh
Sen Guy Guzzone
Del. Vanessa Atterbeary
Del. Pamela Lanman Guzzone
Del . Jennifer Terrasa

From: Bethann Ritter Snyder <britte19@hotmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 25, 2024 2:25 PM
To: budgetfeedback@hcpss.org
Cc: guy.guzzone@senate.state.md.us; vanessa.atterbeary@house.state.md.us;
pam.guzzone@house.state.md.us; jen.terrasa@house.state.md.us; CouncilDistrict1
@howardcountymd.gov; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail
Subject: Attached feedback on HCPSS budget for 2024-2025 School Year
Attachments: 2024-2025 HCPSS Budget Letter 2-26-24.docx

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Please see my attached letter pertaining to the proposed HCPSS budget for the 2024-2025 school year.

Bethann Snyder, Elkridge

February 26, 2024

Dear HCPSS Board of Education;

It is with very mixed emotions – disappointment, frustration, and even anger – that I write today. Disappointment that HCPSS has decided to ask Howard County Council not for what it NEEDS to make our schools successful, but for what it thinks it can get from the County to keep the lights on and the doors open in our schools. Frustration, because you are once again considering cutting important programs like GT courses for elementary schools, music programs like 3rd grade strings, academic supports for math and reading, para-educators, and, worst of all, considering increasing class sizes above the already high 30 students per classroom. Anger, because all of these cuts will harm, not help our students, and make Howard County a less desirable place to raise a family.

Our society likes to treat so many things like pie. Education should not be treated like pie, though you are going to be told by the Acting Superintendent and the Central Office staff that any cut not made HAS to be offset somewhere else, pitting school communities against each other as they try to save and justify funding their own programs. As another parent said in a conversation, it's very Dickensian and definitely NOT a good way to run a school system. Making the cuts I highlight below – or other cuts not noted here – are really just short term band-aids and will only make our school system, and our county, poorer in both the short-term and the long-term.

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(4) Finally, I want to speak up on behalf of our para-educators and our school-family liaison staff. Our para-educators do so much with so little. It was raised at a previous Board meeting that our paras lack laptops to plan lessons and to do sensitive paperwork regarding student performance. Not only do the lack of computers present unacceptable

security risks for private student information, but it puts a financial burden on some of our most underpaid staff. Our paras play key roles in ensuring our already full classrooms function smoothly. And now HCPSS wants to not only increase class sizes but cut the number of paras? Wow. This is just so incredibly short sighted. Increasing classrooms while decreasing classroom support in the form of paras is going to increase teacher burnout, leading to an even greater exodus of experienced teachers, which is the last thing HCPSS or any US school system can afford.

Additionally, the stress on our non-English speaking students and their families will increase if we cut our school liaison staff. These liaisons provide important translation and other services to our students and families for whom English is not their first language. These liaisons help to develop a positive relationship between school and many students' families.

I could go on, but I hope you truly realize how integral ALL of the programs identified for reductions truly are to ensuring HCPSS is a thriving, world-class school system. Slowly picking it apart piece by piece in service to a budget seems so short sighted. You were all elected to be advocates for our schools, students, and staff. Please BE those advocates. Advocate to Council and to our State Delegation for full funding for not only the new Blueprint mandates but also our existing programs. While existing programs may not all be legal requirements, it doesn't mean they lack value or that they aren't necessary. Please do the right thing and advocate for FULL FUNDING for HCPSS for 2024-2025.

Sincerely,

Bethann Snyder,
Elkridge, District 1

Cc: County Executive Calvin Ball
Council Member Liz Walsh
Sen Guy Guzzone
Del. Vanessa Atterbeary
Del. Pamela Lanman Guzzone
Del . Jennifer Terrasa

From: Fletcher Durant <fletcher.durant@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 26, 2024 9:37 AM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: HCPSS Budget Feedback

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Dear Council Members,

I am writing because I believe it is important that the Board of Education ask the County Executive for the money needed to maintain our current level of services and comply with the new Blueprint mandates. If we want to continue to have one of the country's best school systems we need to make it a priority.

I am also writing to implore you not to cut class sizes, 6th grade team building activities, elementary G&T seminars and curriculum extension units, and custodial positions, among others. Small class sizes are what make HoCO schools shine. The 6th grade team building activity was a key building block of my son's experience in middle school. And my youngest benefits from G&T seminars and extension units. Not to mention the extra burden placed on custodial staff if positions are eliminated.

Sincerely,
Fletcher Durant, HCPSS parent

From: [Jessica Most Geisler](mailto:Jessica.Most.Geisler@hpcss.org)
To: boe@hpcss.org; bill_barnes@hpcss.org; budgetfeedback@hpcss.org; [CouncilMail](mailto:CouncilMail@hpcss.org); [executive](mailto:executive@hpcss.org); courtney.watson@house.state.md.us; katiefry.hester@senate.state.md.us
Subject: Urgent Appeal for fully funding HCPSS programming
Date: Monday, February 26, 2024 1:36:25 PM

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

Dear Members of the Howard County Board of Education and Acting-Superintendent Barnes,

I hope this letter finds you well. As a proud parent of an elementary school student, I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS).

It is shocking to see so many proposed cuts to positions and programming in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS), particularly those that will affect elementary school students. I urge you all to request that our elected officials help HCPSS during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

Howard County Schools are WHY we moved here to grow our family. It is WHY our home values continue to soar. Our schools are WHY Howard County continues to grow and thrive. Cutting funding of this proportion to our schools is like cutting off the hand that feeds you.

I urge all of you to ensure the proposed budget for next year and our ask to the County Executive and County Council include funds for :

Music education in the elementary grades, including third grade strings – There is plenty of research that shows the benefits of learning music/instrument starting from a young age.

Continued GT programming in the elementary grades including CEU seminars and Spring/Summer GT BSAP programs – Howard County is known for the exemplary education it offers to its residents and I believe the GT program helps raise the bar for educational standards and challenges for all children. Retaining GT programs, like CEU seminars, helps provide enrichment and extension opportunities to pique student interest and engagement and are vital for all students.

Staffing to ensure that class sizes remain where they are- Current classrooms cannot accommodate additional students and adding students to classes prevents teachers from providing the individualized attention and support that all students need and deserve.

The presence of these programs has become synonymous with Howard County, attracting numerous families, including my own, who specifically opt to reside here and enroll their children in the school system

I kindly request that you ensure the budget eliminates any proposed cuts to these programs and continue to support ***all programs*** that are considered well-managed and ***essential*** in our county.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jessica M. Geisler
215-932-5263

From: [Karen McMorrow](#)
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: Operating Budget Testimony
Date: Monday, February 26, 2024 12:34:36 PM

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

Dear Howard County Council,

I am writing to encourage you to increase the money provided to the Howard County Public school system so that cuts in current levels of HCPSS services do not need to be made. A new library is not a critical need but maintaining the HCPSS staffing and fixing school buildings are a critical need and should be the TOP priority of this county. A new library indirectly affects our students education while having lower classroom sizes and functioning school buildings DIRECTLY affects our students. Our school system is our economic driver for this county.

Also, I would like to ask if you have pushed back to the state on the 300% threshold for universal preK?

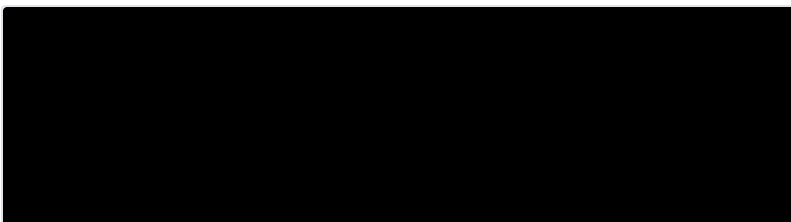
It seems that 300% is too high of a threshold due to staffing needs, placing these NEW students in buildings that are already overcrowded, and not having a sufficient bus service to meet the current needs of the county.

Operating Budget Concerns:

1) **Please do no change increase class size ratios- follow the research that classroom size absolutely affects learning and classroom management**

- a. Student engagement stronger in smaller class sizes
- b. Older buildings have a smaller footprint for classroom size and do not have additional space for more students (68 kids in DMS Gym class already, kids have to take shifts in PE to move)
- c. Classroom behavioral management is optimal with small classroom sizes

[Does Your Child's Class Size Matter?](#)



Does Your Child's Class Size Matter?

Reducing class sizes can have benefits, but teacher quality is also key.

- 2) Please keep 6th g Outdoor Edu
 - a. This is a unique opportunity and long stand tradition in Maryland to educate children on the outdoors which is 'real life' and cannot be replicated in a brick and mortar classroom. Neighboring counties (Montgomery and Carroll) still hold outdoor edu as a multi-day sleepaway opportunity

- 3) Please do not touch/eliminate anything related to Special Education
 - a. These children need ALL the support they can get to learn life skills

- 4) Please keep your transportation analyst
 - a. An ongoing need given the subpar rollout of ZUM and ever increasing population in the county

- 5) Please keep all security positions
 - a. Safety should always be the paramount concern of any school

- 6) **Please keep all building maintenance jobs**
 - a. 43% of all HCPSS buildings are over 50 years old
 - b. **Buildings like Dunloggin Middle School (HIGHEST Capital Improvement Need) are literally falling apart faster than the current maintenance staff can fix them.** Leaking Roof, mice, paint chips falling from the ceiling/ walls, cracked tiles in the bathroom, cracks in the exterior brick/foundation, HVAC & Boiler past useful life ***
 - c. We need MORE maintenance staff, not less

Thank you,
Karen Biederman
Dunloggin MS PTA President; *Personal testimony*

From: B
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Proposed FY2025 HCPSS Budget
Date: Tuesday, February 27, 2024 7:22:23 PM

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

Dear Council Members,

I am a concerned parent of a first grader at Jeffers Hill Elementary School writing to work with the Howard County Public School System to adequately fund our schools. This year millions of dollars in cuts have been proposed that will greatly impact our school system. Howard County Public Schools have long been considered one of the country's best school systems and we need to make providing our children with a safe, world-class education a priority. I care deeply about the environment in which my child is learning, and I hope you feel and will act in the same way.

It is important that class size ratios are not increased. This would be detrimental to all students and staff. Larger classrooms result in less individualized attention from the teachers, lend themselves to a more disruptive environment because there are more students to manage, and mean less participation by students in group discussions. In schools with rooms that are already space-limited with even 18-20 children, adding in two more children and possibly more aides along with them, is too big a burden to bear. For children with special needs, the problems caused by classroom overpopulation is drastically magnified and it is important that personal aids for students receiving special education services are not eliminated. There is already a vast shortage of aides in this area, causing disruption to the classroom and stress for all children and staff.

Howard County is the wealthiest county in Maryland (1) and the seventh wealthiest county in the country (2). It is the responsibility of the County Executive to provide our children with great schools. We cannot afford to have even one politician in Howard County that does not do these things, and that instead uses children to fix budget gaps because children cannot advocate for themselves. I vote accordingly and urge my friends, neighbors, family, and other contacts to do the same.

Please do not force our children to absorb the budget cuts that should be made to other areas such as adding housing, and the library/community center at Lakefront. We need to take care of what we have first with education as the priority, and then we can consider other items.

Respectfully,
Benjamin Estrogano
410-693-5816
benestrogano@gmail.com

(1) <https://propertyclub.nyc/article/richest-counties-in-maryland,11/20/2023>

(2) <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/slideshows/richest-counties-in-america,12/20/2023>

From: [Jen MacCormack](#)
To: [executive](#); [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: Fund our schools
Date: Tuesday, February 27, 2024 11:07:37 AM

[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 members of the County Council,

I am a parent of three young children who attend Bryant Woods Elementary School. I am writing to encourage you to work with the Howard County Public School System to adequately fund our schools. This year millions of dollars in cuts have been proposed that will greatly impact our school system.

Howard County's public school system is already struggling. Schools are overcrowded, students with IEPs and 504s are not getting the services they are entitled to, teachers are burning out, and buildings are falling apart as maintenance is deferred again and again. And yet the current budget is proposing to cut even more funding to important programs and increase class sizes.

We cannot increase class sizes and continue to deliver quality education to every student. We cannot cut special education funding and meet our obligation to students with disabilities. We cannot cut arts programs and expect students to emerge well-rounded from their school years. We cannot cut staff and support positions and expect HCPSS employees to somehow continue running the schools with skeleton crews.

Our children deserve better and you have a hand in their future. Please, work with the BOE and the schools to ensure that they have what they need without drastic cuts.

Thank you,

Jen MacCormack

From: [Jennifer Patro](#)
To: [Ball, Calvin](#); boe@hcpss.org; CouncilDistrict1@howardcountymd.gov; [CouncilMail](#); bill_barnes@hcpss.org
Subject: Urgent Appeal for HCPSS funding
Date: Tuesday, February 27, 2024 9:59:00 PM

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

Dear Dr. Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and
Acting-Superintendent Barnes,

I hope this letter finds you well. As a proud parent of music-loving students, I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS).

It is shocking to see the report in the Baltimore Sun regarding so many cuts to positions in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

Research consistently highlights the positive impact of music education on academic performance. Students engaged in music often show improved cognitive skills, better concentration, and enhanced problem-solving abilities. These benefits extend beyond the music room and positively influence their academic achievements.

I also would encourage you to reconsider increasing class sizes. Our schools cannot safely handle an increase in class size and teachers should not be allowed to make sacrifices to an already challenging job.

I understand the budgetary challenges that HCPSS faces, but I urge you to consider the invaluable contribution that music programs make to our students' lives. By investing more in HCPSS overall as a county, we are investing in the future leaders, artists, and innovators of our community.

I kindly request that you work together to solve any proposed cuts to music funding and ideas class sizes and continue to support all programs and students that are considered well-managed and essential in our county.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Thomas
5291 Talbots Landing Ellicott City
(410)6889903

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

From: [Melinda Roch](#)
To: [Ball, Calvin](#); boe@hcpss.org; [CouncilMail](#); bill_barnes@hcpss.org
Subject: Urgent Appeal for HCPSS funding
Date: Tuesday, February 27, 2024 8:16:48 PM

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

Dear Dr. Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and
Acting-Superintendent Barnes,

I hope this letter finds you well. As a proud parent of a three music-loving and unique students, I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS).

It is shocking to see the report in the Baltimore Sun regarding so many cuts to positions in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

As a parent of a student who was diagnosed with ADHD and required a 504 plan from 4th grade through graduation, it's appalling to even consider increasing class sizes. One of the biggest struggles for students with ADHD are distractions and adding more students to each classroom will exacerbate the problem. Not only that, but the teachers are overloaded. They already need time without student instruction to work on class plans and grading. I can only imagine how much work they will face if the teaching staff is downsized and classrooms increased. Increasing class sizes will be a disservice to teachers and students alike, with the students who have the most needs impacted on a greater scale.

On a related topic, the GT program has been a vital part of my children's education. The GT seminars in elementary school helped my children explore subjects they would not normally be exposed to. This sparked my child's interests in coding and aerospace. These things would not be possible if we did not have the wonderful GT teachers.

I also want to email to remind our elected officials that music education, in all of its forms, plays a pivotal role in shaping well-rounded individuals, fostering creativity, discipline, and teamwork. My children's involvement in music in Howard County schools has not only enriched their academic experience but has also contributed to their overall personal development.

Research consistently highlights the positive impact of music education on academic performance. Students engaged in music often show improved cognitive skills, better concentration, and enhanced problem-solving abilities. These benefits extend beyond the music room and positively influence their academic achievements.

Furthermore, our Gold Standard music programs contribute to building a sense of community within our schools. The collaborative nature of musical ensembles teaches students the value of teamwork, discipline, and perseverance. These qualities are essential not only in their academic journey but also in their future careers.

I understand the budgetary challenges that HCPSS faces, but I urge you to consider the invaluable contribution that GT and music programs make to our students' lives and the large task loads our teachers already face today. By investing more in HCPSS overall as a county, we are investing in the future leaders, artists, and innovators of our community. Our wonderful school system is one of the main draws for people and businesses moving to Maryland.

I kindly request that you work together to solve any proposed cuts to GT and music funding, maintaining current classroom sizes, as well as continue to support all programs that are considered well-managed and essential in our county.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Melinda Roch

From: tigger@teachers.org
To: [CouncilMail](#); [Ball, Calvin](#)
Subject: Urgent Appeal for HCPSS Funding
Date: Tuesday, February 27, 2024 9:18:29 PM

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

Hi,

I'm writing you this email as a parent of a child that want through this school system from K-12 and is now a teacher in the school system and also as an employee of HCPSS myself. This budget that is being proposed is very devastating to myself and all HCPSS staff.

On January 11, 2024, Interim Superintendent Bill Barnes announced that the school system had approached its FY25 budget development process in a very different way than previous years. Mr. Barnes mentioned the importance of asking for a "reasonable" budget as opposed to an "aspirational" one. Unfortunately, the proposed budget that was shared on January 18 is anything but reasonable. On top of the elimination of almost 350 staff positions, the proposed budget also includes an increase in class size of 1-2 students. The amount of money earmarked for staff compensation would barely cover a step and 1% cost of living adjustment for HCPSS certificated and ESP staff members.

We can barely afford to live on our salary now with the cost of living happening in the last couple of years.

For years we have been told that HCPSS cares about the mental health of its staff. How are these budget cuts showing us that they care about their employees.

The cuts just put more work load on our plates, which mean less time for our family. This also doesn't help the mental health of our students because how can teachers give their attention to each student.

These cuts don't just impact staff members - they impact our schools, our programs, and, ultimately, our students and communities.

Mr. Barnes also argued that it would be unreasonable for HCPSS to ask the county for more money than the school system received from the county last year. Why would the Board of Education do that instead of asking for the money we need to adequately fund our school system?

It's not "aspirational" or unreasonable to ask for the funding our students and staff deserve.

I'm pleading with all of you as our elected officials to work with HCPSS for a budget that actually meets the needs of our students, staff and the community to have the best school system in Maryland. As these decisions are made think about the side of the narrative and history of Howard County you will be on, how your decision will affect not only the lives of your constituents but also your own life in Howard County, and the choice of the people to allow you to continue the work you do for them each and every day.

Thank you in advance for your support.

To Howard County residents and HCPSS employees.

Sent using the mobile mail app

From: [Danielle Regester](#)
To: [BoE Email](#); [CouncilMail](#); bill_barnes@hcpss.org; budget@hcpss.org; [Ball, Calvin](#)
Subject: Appeal for HCPSS funding
Date: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 7:23:36 AM

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

Dear Dr. Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Acting-Superintendent Barnes,

As I'm sure you are aware our schools are facing a budget shortfall and proposing significant cuts that will impact teachers and children throughout the county. I'm disappointed that the school system is not asking for the full amount that is needed to keep our current standards of education in place.

I look to all of you to solve this problem together. It is not fair to the staff, teachers or children to increase the amount of students, reduce aids, or cut music programs. It is unacceptable to me that in one of the richest counties we are facing these cutbacks. Teachers are worried about their jobs and parents are worried for their children's education.

I have had a child in the school system for 7 years and it is exhausting year after year. Costs are up everywhere, of course the budget is going to increase, why is this not planned for? You all know when this will happen. Work together and figure out a plan. Having this drama every year is unnecessary.

The amount of home building that has occurred over the last decade has strained our schools. The schools should be given more resources, not less. It is always the schools that are punished, while the developers make money and this has to stop.

People move here for schools, and they will leave because of them too if all of these cuts occur.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Danielle Regester
Daisy Road
Woodbine, MD

Danielle Regester
danielle.regester@gmail.com

From: [Emily Turnbull](#)
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: HCPSS Budget FY2025
Date: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 3:27:41 PM

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

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to encourage you to work with the Howard County Public School System to adequately fund our schools. This year's millions of dollars in cuts that have been proposed will greatly impact our school system.

My family is just one of thousands of families that call Howard County their home. I can't speak for every family, but I am willing to guess, like my family, the strength of the school systems, is part of their decision to move to and/or stay in the County. Businesses choose to do business here because their employees want to live here. People are willing and happy to pay a substantially higher tax basis because it seemed like a value-added proposition. Our taxes go to something that we see value in. Schools play a big part in that.

Teachers want to teach here. Because HCPSS has always been one of the best. Where they can teach and the resources are there to allow children to thrive.

With these budget cuts, it is another blow to several years of blows. We have to stop the decline and keep our school system funded. For the kids, yes. But also, so the businesses and families want to make Howard County their home for years and generations to come.

Please help keep Howard County special and one of the best places to live in the US.

Sincerely,

Emily Sachek
Elkridge, MD

From: [Jennifer Wong](#)
To: [Ball, Calvin](#); boe@hcpss.org; [CouncilMail](#); bill_barnes@hcpss.org; budget@hcpss.org
Subject: Urgent Appeal for HCPSS funding
Date: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 3:00:35 PM

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

Dear Dr. Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Acting-Superintendent Barnes,

I hope this letter finds you well. As a proud parent of two GT, music-loving, and technology-loving students, I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS), and the timing of those cuts in regards to employee appreciation week. Many teachers received an email thanking them for their service only a few hours after their administrations told them that their positions were being cut by the end of the year.

It is shocking to see the report in the Baltimore Sun regarding so many cuts to positions in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

G.T. classes have been crucial for my children, as they allow high performing students to continue being challenged and encourage exploration and problem solving on a level consistent with their needs. They also allow students to be taught in smaller groups, adopting a more personalized learning experience and encouraging more rigor and further mastery of topics. The G.T. teachers do not only teach above grade level math at all elementary schools, but also provide student-interest based seminars, allowing opportunities for students to receive advanced-level instruction in research, both critical and creative thinking, engineering, and other STEAM areas.

G.T programs offer extension units, or CEUs. These units provide extensions of grade level topics for more in depth rigorous instruction of curricula, with group projects to showcase learning. The proposed plan is to cut many of these elementary jobs, and increase class sizes, leaving the classroom teacher to cater and differentiate to all the levels in their classes. This includes below grade level, on grade level, and above grade level students. How will this blanket teaching lead to more rigorous learning? It won't. It will be nearly impossible to keep students engaged in this way and teachers will not be able to keep up with all these demands.

I also want to email to remind our elected officials that music education, in all of its forms, plays a pivotal role in shaping well-rounded individuals, fostering creativity, discipline, and teamwork. My child's involvement in music in Howard County schools has not only enriched their academic experience but has also contributed to their overall personal development.

Research consistently highlights the positive impact of music education on academic performance. Students engaged in music often show improved cognitive skills, better concentration, and enhanced problem-solving abilities. These benefits extend beyond the music room and positively influence their academic achievements.

Furthermore, our Gold Standard music programs contribute to building a sense of community within our schools. The collaborative nature of musical ensembles teaches students the value of teamwork, discipline, and perseverance. These qualities are essential not only in their academic journey but also in their future careers.

Last time there were budget cuts, it was to the instructional technology program in elementary schools. This was devastating to the education of students, in my opinion. Students in many grades are still struggling to get the crucial digital citizenship education and learn the skills involved in computational thinking that is expected of them in the half hour classes offered once a week due to these cuts. Though many of them claim to understand technology, there is an increase in cyberbullying and social media, while there remains a lack of basic understanding of spreadsheets, presentation software and word processing skills. I am under no illusions that this is an easy decision, but the answer is never cutting teachers and making class sizes larger. This is to the detriment of our county in the short term, and society in the long run.

I understand the budgetary challenges that HCPSS faces, but I urge you to consider the invaluable contribution that technology, music and G.T. programs make in our students' lives. By investing more in HCPSS overall as a county, we are investing in the future leaders, artists, and innovators of our community.

I kindly request that you work together to solve any proposed cuts to G.T, music,, or technology funding and continue to support ALL programs that are considered well-managed and essential in our county.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Wong

techtalkwong@gmail.com

From: [Melanie Gonzalez](#)
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: HCPSS Budget
Date: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 3:41:07 PM

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

Dear Council Members: I am writing to encourage you to work with the Howard County Public School System to adequately fund our schools. This year millions of dollars in cuts have been proposed that will greatly impact our school system. It is important that we listen to our teachers and parents, even students to bring more money to our education system.

I believe that the current levels of services do not need to be made such as • personal aids for students receiving special education services • Several support positions in special education that provide training and consultation • G/T seminars and not to increase class sizes.

Our son has received some of these needed services with his IEP and has excelled and thrived because of them. By removing them we will do injustice to those like our son who still need these services and to others coming behind him. Larger class sizes will no longer allow teachers to build relationships with their students if we continue to add more students. Relationships are developmentally important at this age in elementary level. Esp those with IEPs and 504s like our children.

Thank you for your time

Melanie Gonzalez

From: [Millie Thomas](#)
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: FY25 Budget Cuts - Parent's Public Testimony
Date: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 9:26:38 PM

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

Dear Council Members:

I am writing to encourage you to work with the Howard County Public School System to adequately fund our schools. This year millions of dollars in cuts have been proposed that will greatly impact our school system. It is imperative if we want to continue to have one of the country's best school systems we need to make it a priority.

Below is a list of some of the things proposed to be cut:

- Change in class size ratios, increasing class sizes by 2
- Elimination of grade 6 team building activities (what used to be Outdoor Education but became the field trip to Robinson Nature center)
- Elementary Gifted and Talented seminars and Curriculum Extension Units (CEUs)
- Elimination of 3rd grade strings
- Curricular field trips (kindergarten trips to the library)
- High School Science paraeducators
- Reduction in HS Media Specialists
- Elimination of BSAP and GT Summer Institutes
- Reduction of College/Career transportation- bus services may not be offered to students taking classes at HCC
- Support for the MESA program
- Elimination of personal aids for students receiving special education services
- Several support positions in special education that provide training and consultation
- 15 custodial positions
- Elimination of the transportation analyst
- Elimination of 1.00 Security Investigator and 1.00 Security Assistant
- 13 building maintenance positions
- 13 ground maintenance positions

I am a parent of a 3rd grade student at Laurel Woods Elementary. I feel 3rd grade is already experiencing overcrowding in classrooms. To increase class sizes is absurd. In addition, my 3rd grader is extremely proud and appreciative to be offered the opportunity to participate in 3rd orchestra. So highly motivated, she has registered to participate in HCPSS ES Solo and Ensemble Festival. Not only excelling in music, she participates in special GT cohorts and looks forward to GT opportunities in the upcoming year.

Although, my current HCPSS student is in elementary school, I included all middle and high school programs because the loss of any mentioned will affect her future and every HCPSS student. My eldest daughter who graduated several years back, excelled in many of the mentioned programs, i.e., 3 grade strings, BSAP summer camps, field trips throughout elementary to high school, GT and AP classes to name a few. She had many influential interactions with many key personnel mentioned above as well! As a student who immersed herself in books, media specialists were her best friends.

We have witnessed how reducing or eliminating support, custodial, security and building/maintenance staff negatively affects school systems. Please do not allow this to occur in Howard County!

Again, as a parent of a previous HCPSS graduate and current 3rd grader, I implore you to not cut the above programs! Our students are our future and deserve every opportunity and all personnel support available to them.

Sincerely,
Concerned Parent

From: [Qi Z](#)
To: bill_barnes@hcpss.org; boe@hcpss.org; [Ball, Calvin](#); [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: HCPSS 2025 Budget
Date: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 12:40:59 AM

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

Dear Dr. Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Acting-Superintendent Barnes,

I am a parent of two HCPSS students. I am writing to express my deep concern about the staffing cut on instruction, GT and music programs.

Education is the foundation of Howard county. As parents who work remotely, both my husband and I have the flexibility to work from anywhere in the country. The sole reason we chose to stay in Howard county is because of education. Through the past few years, both of my children received great education at HCPSS.

Both of them have participated in orchestra, band and chorus. They both enjoy the music learning and interactions with friends and teachers. All the music teachers we interacted with are awesome music professionals. The activities help promote creativity, team work and self expression. Those are important life skills and school is the best place to learn those skills.

Both of my children are also in the GT programs. They get the chance to learn materials tailored to their learning level. It is important to keep them challenged and receive the right level of education to build a solid foundation for college and more advanced education. Being able to receive their GT education at an earlier age also allows them to get ready for Honor and AP courses in high school. Those are critical to college admissions.

In addition, I'm shocked to see the magnitude of staff cutting in instruction. For high school, we are looking to reduce from 934.4 to 845.8, which is 61 less than even 2021. I'm very concerned the increase in class size will have significant negative impacts on both teachers and students. Howard county is famous for the quality of education. I'm concerned this is going to harm the quality of education our children receive.

Dr. Ball stated in the State of Business Address: **“the State of Business is strong. Our future is bigger, bolder, and brighter. We are resilient and embracing economic vitality. We are defined by the promise of this brand new day that will set an unshakeable foundation for our shared future”** Our children is our future. While **business remains strong**, I fail to comprehend how cutting education generates a bigger, bolder, and brighter or an unshakable future. As a resident of Howard County, I strongly recommend revisiting the budget and STOP cutting back on instruction, GT and music. Let's provide the education our children deserve. Let's respect and retain the talents we have in our school system. I can be reached via email or text for further discussion.

Thanks!
Qi Zhang
Howard county resident
607-351-9511

From: [Sheila Ravendhran](#)
To: [Ball, Calvin](#); boe@hcpss.org; [CouncilMail](#); bill_barnes@hcpss.org
Subject: Urgent appeal for Hcpss funding
Date: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 9:48:20 AM

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

Dear Dr. Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and
Acting-Superintendent Barnes,

I hope this letter finds you well. As a pediatrician in Howard County, and proud parent of 3 music-loving students, I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS).

It is shocking to see the report in the Baltimore Sun regarding so many cuts to positions in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

I also want to email to remind our elected officials that music education, in all of its forms, plays a pivotal role in shaping well-rounded individuals, fostering creativity, discipline, and teamwork. My patients' and children's involvement in music in Howard County schools has not only enriched their academic experience but has also contributed to their overall personal development.

Research consistently highlights the positive impact of music education on academic performance. Students engaged in music often show improved cognitive skills, better concentration, and enhanced problem-solving abilities. These benefits extend beyond the music room and positively influence their academic achievements.

Furthermore, our Gold Standard music programs contribute to building a sense of community within our schools. The collaborative nature of musical ensembles teaches students the value of teamwork, discipline, and perseverance. These qualities are essential not only in their academic journey but also in their future careers.

I understand the budgetary challenges that HCPSS faces, but I urge you to consider the invaluable contribution that music programs make to our students' lives. By investing more in HCPSS overall as a county, we are investing in the future leaders, artists, and innovators of our community.

I kindly request that you work together to solve any proposed cuts to music funding and continue to support all programs that are considered well-managed and essential in our county.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sheila Ravendhran, MD, MPH
443-370-3999

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: [Pillai, Anita](#)
To: [executive](#); boe@hcpss.org; [CouncilMail](#); [Yungmann, David](#)
Subject: Urgent Appeal for HCPSS funding
Date: Thursday, February 29, 2024 11:12:57 AM

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

Dear Board of Education members,

I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). I believe it is important that the Board of Education ask the County Executive for the money needed to maintain our current level of services and comply with the new Blueprint mandates. If we want to continue to have one of the country's best school systems we need to make it a priority. I am also writing to implore you not to cut funding for GT programs and 3rd grade Orchestra . Additionally reducing staffing and increasing class sizes will have an impact on the quality of education our children receive.

Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Anita Kiran

Confidentiality Notice:: Information contained in or attached to this email may be non-public, privileged, or confidential. Do not use, save, or copy any of that information, and do not share it with anyone else, unless you are the intended recipient. The sender has not authorized you to save, copy, use, or share any information provided to you in error. If the sender sent you this email or any attachment by mistake, please let the sender know by replying to this email and then deleting it.

From: [Ann Lee](#)
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: Pressing Appeal for HCPSS Funding
Date: Thursday, February 29, 2024 6:05:51 PM

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

Dear Howard County Council,

I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). I believe it is important that the Board of Education ask the County Executive for the money needed to maintain our current level of services and comply with the new Blueprint mandates. If we want to continue to have one of the country's best school systems we need to make it a priority. I am also writing to implore you not to cut funding for GT programs and 3rd grade Orchestra . Additionally reducing staffing and increasing class sizes will have an impact on the quality of education our children receive.

Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Lee

From: [Beth Kunkoski](#)
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: Please allocate more money to HCPSS
Date: Thursday, February 29, 2024 10:21:57 AM

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

Dear Council Members:

I am writing to encourage you to work with the Howard County Public School System to adequately fund our schools. This year millions of dollars in cuts have been proposed that will greatly impact our school system. I understand the county has not allocated enough money to the schools to cover the new Blueprint Mandates. It is the county's responsibility to adequately fund the schools to meet required mandates and maintain the current levels of staffing. Our county's schools need to meet the demands of the development of the county. If we want to continue to have one of the country's best school systems we need to make it a priority. I am also writing to implore you to ensure there is adequate funding. Please make sure the following cuts do not happen:

1. Change class size ratios. My son's kindergarten math class already has 24 5-year olds with no aides. My son got stuck on a problem and started crying. The teacher did her best, but a lot can happen with 23 other kids when she is focusing on one student. Class sizes are already too large and cannot be made any larger. This is how students get left behind.
2. Cut Elementary Gifted and Talented seminars and Curriculum Extension Units. A huge portion of our county population is identified as gifted and talented as soon as they start elementary school. If we don't encourage and facilitate their growth from the start, these kids will not live up to their potential. Howard county will be no different than any other county/state if we leave our gifted and talented program behind and all of the students along with it.
3. Cut Curricular Field Trips. My son is in kindergarten and is so excited for his trip to the library on March 20th. The library is such a great resource we want to advertise to all of our residents. We need to encourage kids to read and see what is available to all county residents. The same is true for the Robinson Nature Center. It is important our students see all of the great resources in our state. School is not only about sitting at a desk learning to read, write and do arithmetic.
4. Cut special education positions. Our elementary school (Triadelphia Ridge) is the home of a regional program for students with emotional disabilities. Students run around the halls and hit people on a daily basis. It is awful what these children go through and all of the other children witness daily. It is essential that there are enough special education staff members to assist these students in distress and minimize the disruptions to the entire school and maintain the safety of all students. This is a matter of student safety and ensuring students are able to learn. My son has been hit in the face by a special education student and there are reports of the entire cafeteria being evacuated due to other students. You can't take resources away from this program or there will be significant injuries regularly. Please don't put my kids at risk to get more seriously injured from these children that cannot be controlled without special education aides.
5. Cut the Transportation analyst - There have been a lot of bus issues and I believe there are

more plans to change school start times for next year. There better be enough resources to make that process as smooth as possible for every student in the entire county. Every kid deserves public transportation to school unless they live right next door to the school.

6. Cut building and ground maintenance positions. My understanding is there is already a large backlog of work to be done on the schools. In order to maintain safe facilities, these positions must be adequately staffed to fulfill the responsibilities of all school buildings in the county again or people will be injured.

My kids are little and love school. It is your responsibility to ensure the school board has the resources necessary to ensure a safe and adequate learning environment to allow my kids to grow and learn. The teachers already do so much more than we could ever imagine. Please do not continue to ask them to do unreasonable jobs or we will lose our best assets, the loving teachers and administrators.

Sincerely,

Beth Kunkoski
Ellicott City, MD

From: [JAPTE](#)
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: Appeal to Continue HCPSS Funding
Date: Thursday, February 29, 2024 5:29:32 PM

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

Dear Howard County Council,

I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). I believe it is important that the Board of Education ask the County Executive for the money needed to maintain our current level of services and comply with the new Blueprint mandates. If we want to continue to have one of the country's best school systems we need to make it a priority. I am also writing to implore you not to cut funding for GT programs and 3rd grade Orchestra . Additionally reducing staffing and increasing class sizes will have an impact on the quality of education our children receive.

Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Mr. J Apte

From: [Jennifer Creticos](#)
To: [executive](#); [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: HCPSS budget concerns
Date: Thursday, February 29, 2024 11:20:00 AM

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

Hello!

As the county considers next year's budget, please allocate more money to HCPSS so that Howard County's education system can remain strong and resilient.

Any budget cuts that result in larger class sizes, fewer educators, and/or fewer educational programs (including orchestra and summer programming) would hurt all of the children in this county. Every hope for the future starts with our kids.

Thank you,
Jennifer Creticos
William Creticos (PRES kindergartener)

From: [BIG GUY](#)
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: Important Appeal for HCPSS funding
Date: Thursday, February 29, 2024 2:25:02 PM

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

Dear Howard County Council,

I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). I believe it is important that the Board of Education ask the County Executive for the money needed to maintain our current level of services and comply with the new Blueprint mandates. If we want to continue to have one of the country's best school systems we need to make it a priority. I am also writing to implore you not to cut funding for GT programs and 3rd grade Orchestra . Additionally reducing staffing and increasing class sizes will have an impact on the quality of education our children receive.

Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Joel Navarro

From: [Liz Petrella](#)
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: HCPSS Budgett
Date: Thursday, February 29, 2024 11:23:13 AM

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

Dear Council Members:

I am writing to encourage you to work with the Howard County Public School System to adequately fund our schools. This year millions of dollars in cuts have been proposed that will greatly impact our school system. If we want to continue to have one of the country's best school systems we need to make it a priority.

I am also writing to implore you to increase the money so that the budget does not cut elementary school GT programs, 3rd grade orchestra classes, curricular field trips, custodial and maintenance positions necessary for our schools. The elementary programs provide additional benefits for our students' academic growth, and it has been found that students who participate in programs such as orchestra also see academic growth in other areas such as math. Please do not cut these programs.

Sincerely,
Liz Petrella

From: [Miser Patel](#)
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: Very Urgent Appeal for HCPSS Funding
Date: Thursday, February 29, 2024 5:13:02 PM

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

Dear HC Council,

I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). I believe it is important that the Board of Education ask the County Executive for the money needed to maintain our current level of services and comply with the new Blueprint mandates. If we want to continue to have one of the country's best school systems we need to make it a priority. I am also writing to implore you not to cut funding for GT programs and 3rd grade Orchestra . Additionally reducing staffing and increasing class sizes will have an impact on the quality of education our children receive.

Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Mr. Patel

From: [Nicole Wieszka](#)
To: boe@hcpss.org; [CouncilMail](#); dyungmann@howardcountymd.gov; [executive](#)
Subject: Urgent Appeal for HCPSS funding
Date: Thursday, February 29, 2024 2:11:31 PM

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

Dear Board of Education members, I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). I believe it is important that the Board of Education ask the County Executive for the money needed to maintain our current level of services and comply with the new Blueprint mandates. If we want to continue to have one of the country's best school systems we need to make it a priority. I am also writing to implore you not to cut funding for GT programs and 3rd grade Orchestra . Additionally reducing staffing and increasing class sizes will have an impact on the quality of education our children receive. Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nicole Wieszka (mother of two Howard County elementary school students)

From: [Anonymous](#)
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: Urgent Appeal for HCPSS funding
Date: Thursday, February 29, 2024 2:09:29 PM

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

Dear Howard County Council members,

I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). I believe it is important that the Board of Education ask the County Executive for the money needed to maintain our current level of services and comply with the new Blueprint mandates. If we want to continue to have one of the country's best school systems we need to make it a priority. I am also writing to implore you not to cut funding for GT programs and 3rd grade Orchestra . Additionally reducing staffing and increasing class sizes will have an impact on the quality of education our children receive.

Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Pranav Pattel

From: Praneet Randhawa <praneetrandhawa@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 29, 2024 12:13 PM
To: boe@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; Yungmann, David; executive
Subject: Budget concern

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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

Hello all:

I am a resident of Howard county with on kid in Kindergarten and another entering kindergarten next year at TRES.

I am going to be very honest in this email with you all. I bought an overpriced house with high property tax in this county for one and only one reason- to have access to the best schools with the best activities a public school system can offer in this area. In my view this area doesn't offer much more than great schools and if you all don't understand this in a crystal clear manner then that's very tragic.

I strongly recommend revisiting taking away orchestra programs, reducing GT programs, increasing classroom size or any programs that help Howard county public school system achieve its success rates.

Thank you for reading this. I hope you all can reflect on your anticipated budget decisions.

Praneet Randhawa

From: deep_pri@yahoo.com
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: Urgent Advocacy for HCPSS School System Budget: A Plea for Our Children's Education
Date: Thursday, February 29, 2024 10:57:44 AM

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

Greetings,

I hope this message finds you well. As a concerned parent and resident of Maryland, I am writing to express my deep concern about the proposed budget cuts to the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). Our schools play a vital role in shaping the future of our children, and I believe that we must prioritize their education for the betterment of our community.

I understand the challenges associated with budgeting, but I want to bring to your attention the potential repercussions of some proposed cuts that could significantly impact the quality of education our children receive. It is my sincere hope that we can work together to explore alternative solutions that will safeguard the future of our educational system.

- 1. Change in Class Size Ratios:** Increasing class sizes by two students may compromise the individualized attention our children need for effective learning. Smaller class sizes allow for more personalized instruction, fostering a conducive environment for academic success. I propose considering alternative avenues to address budget constraints without compromising the quality of education.
- 2. Elimination of Grade 6 Team Building Activities:** The removal of team-building activities, specifically the field trip to the Robinson Nature Center, deprives our children of valuable experiences that contribute to their personal and social development. Such activities go beyond the traditional classroom setting, instilling teamwork, leadership, and a love for nature.
- 3. Elimination of Elementary Gifted and Talented (GT) Seminars and Curriculum Extension Units:** Gifted and talented programs are crucial in nurturing the potential of exceptional students. Cutting these programs may hinder the growth of our brightest minds. Investing in these initiatives ensures that we are fostering a diverse range of talents within our educational system.
- 4. Elimination of 3rd Grade Strings Music Program:** Music education is integral to a well-rounded curriculum. The elimination of the 3rd-grade strings music program not only diminishes opportunities for artistic expression but also deprives students of the cognitive benefits associated with music education.
- 5. Reduction in High School Science Para educators:** High school science para educators play a pivotal role in supporting both students and teachers. Their reduction may lead to increased workloads for educators and diminished support for students who require additional assistance in grasping complex

scientific concepts.

6. **Reduction in High School Media Specialists:** Media specialists are essential in fostering information literacy and research skills among students. Reducing their numbers could hinder students' ability to navigate the vast sea of information available to them, impacting their academic and personal development.
7. **Elimination of BSAP and GT Summer Institutes:** Summer institutes provide valuable enrichment opportunities, particularly for underrepresented students and those in gifted and talented programs. Maintaining these institutes ensures that all students, regardless of background, have access to educational experiences that can positively shape their future.
8. **Reduction of College/Career Transportation:** Limiting transportation options for students taking classes at HCC may pose a barrier to their pursuit of higher education and career development. Accessible transportation is a key factor in promoting educational equity and ensuring that all students have equal opportunities.

I understand the challenges you face in balancing the budget, and I appreciate your dedication to the well-being of our community. I am confident that, together, we can find innovative solutions that preserve the integrity of our educational system. Please consider the long-term impact on our children and future generations as we navigate these budgetary decisions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Priya Deepak

From: [Shilpa Jain](#)
To: [executive](#); boe@hcpss.org; [CouncilMail](#); [Yungmann, David](#)
Subject: Urgent Appeal for HCPSS funding
Date: Thursday, February 29, 2024 2:10:22 PM

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

Dear Board of Education members,

I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). I believe it is important that the Board of Education ask the County Executive for the money needed to maintain our current level of services and comply with the new Blueprint mandates. If we want to continue to have one of the country's best school systems we need to make it a priority. I am also writing to implore you not to cut funding for GT programs and 3rd grade Orchestra . Additionally reducing staffing and increasing class sizes will have an impact on the quality of education our children receive.

Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Shilpa Jain