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**From:** Allison Cotilla <allison.cotilla@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 29, 2025 5:03 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** Please fully fund HCPSS

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

Hi! I am both a parent and a substitute teacher at Phelps Luck Elementary school. Their GT program and music program are a HUGE part of the Phelps luck community. Please fully fund the budget!

Allison Cotilla  
Sent from my iPhone

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**From:** Angela McMellen Brannigan <mcmellen@fastmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 28, 2025 10:06 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** 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 County Executive Ball and Members of the County Council,

I am writing to express my displeasure with the school budget that the council passed. I am uncertain why you continue to underfund the school system. This is two years in a row when the school system has faced huge budget cuts. It seems like the school system is the first place you look to when you need to make budget cuts instead of it being the last.

The quality of education in this county is in serious jeopardy because of this seemingly chronic underfunding. You must work to adequately fund the schools in this county even if that means cuts to other county services or developing novel sources of revenue. The schools bring people into the county, but that will no longer be the case if these cuts erode the quality of education offered.

You must start TODAY to find a durable solution to school funding that will maintain all the wonderful parts of the HCPSS experience that people flock to HoCo to enjoy.

Angela McMellen Brannigan  
District 4

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**From:** Annie McLean <annie.w.mclean@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 29, 2025 12:41 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin; Budget Testimony; budgetfeedback@hcpss.org; boe@hcpss.org  
**Cc:** Rob McLean  
**Subject:** Fully Fund Our Schools

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

Dear Community Leaders,

As Howard County residents, we find it absolutely unacceptable that you have decreased the percentage of funding received by our schools over time and have not yet made the decision to fully fund the school budget. The crown jewel of Howard County is our schools. If you continue to deprioritize funding them, they will slide into mediocrity. Cutting teachers, increasing class sizes, cutting third grade strings and elementary GT programs are all things that will demonstrably worsen the quality of our schools and the education that our children receive. This not only a disservice to our children, but to everyone in our county as it will quickly make Howard County a less desirable place to live.

Please do everything in your power to prioritize fully funding the schools. We need our teachers and the excellent GT and Strings programs to stay.

Thank you for your consideration.

Annie and Rob McLean

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**From:** Bethelihem Debesai <dbethelihem@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 29, 2025 2:40 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** Please increase funding to protect HCPSS students and teachers

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

Dear County Council Members and County Executive Ball,

I'm writing as a concerned parent and community member to urge you to increase funding for the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) in the FY26 budget.

Right now, our schools face a shortfall of over \$9 million, and proposed cuts will devastate elementary education in particular. These include:

Elimination of 42 elementary media paraeducators

Reduction of 39 elementary Gifted & Talented educators

Cutting 12 positions from the 3rd grade strings program

Elimination of nearly 17 additional elementary teaching positions

These educators and programs are critical to student growth, enrichment, and success. Cutting them will hurt our children — academically, emotionally, and creatively.

Thank you

Bethelihem Debesai

5412 luckpenny pl

Columbia md 21045

I am a parent of kindergartener and 2nd grader at Phelps luck elementary school

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**From:** Carol Cuesta <Carol\_Cuesta@hcpss.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 29, 2025 3:41 PM  
**To:** BoE Email; Jolene Mosley; Linfeng Chen; Andrea Chamblee; Meg Ricks; Jennifer Mallo; Jacquelin McCoy; Antonia Watts; Student Board Member; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail; Bill Barnes  
**Subject:** Budget Concerns

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

Hi,

I am a media para educator in Howard County Public School System. I have been in my current position since 2017 after over 25 years of running an in-home daycare in Howard County. I have always prided myself on making a difference in the lives of Howard County children and helping alleviate some of the anxiety that goes along with leaving your children in someone else's care while you go to work. Even though my job may not be as personal as it was in a daycare setting, I still have the same work ethics. That being said, my job is usually one of the positions that may be cut.

Our media center is the "hub" of our school. We have one of the highest check-outs in the county. We love helping avid readers and those that may not like to read as much find something that works. There is something for everyone here as our media specialist makes it a priority to always get new book ideas from the students as to what they want to read next or what the next great book is to be released.

My job is important. My media specialist always says she would not be able to do her job as effectively without me working at the circulation desk and dealing with tech issues while she is doing administrative tasks, book ordering, weeding, curating reports and the like. The media paraeducator positions are critical in the elementary and middle school level. As high schools are even larger with populations of over one thousand students, two media specialists help keep access to a professional at all times.

The inclusion of "technical and clerical assistance" is important because it speaks to the fact that most of what media specialists do is not actually check out books to patrons. Paras are invaluable because they handle checkout duties, run reports, shelve books, pull resources (at the direction of the professional librarian), and create book promotion displays. We cannot do what we do, as well as we do it, without media paras.

At a time when critical thinking and ethical use of information are at the forefront of the daily news, professional librarians and library paraeducators are more important than ever.

Please take a look at where students will be impacted on a daily basis, and please put student impacted positions first. As you face the extraordinary challenge of balancing the budget, please preserve our library media programs with full staffing of both professional media specialists and media paraeducators. Libraries are the central hub of learning for every person in our community. Please let us keep it that way!

Thank you for your consideration.

*Carol Cuesta*

Media Para Educator  
Lime Kiln Middle School

410-880-5988



*To the world you may be one person but to one person you may be the world".*

*Unknown Author*

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**From:** snap@howardcountymd.gov  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 12:47 PM  
**To:** bdsmith@howardcountymd.gov; ianderson@howardcountymd.gov;  
cgelwicks@howardcountymd.gov; cresspass@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Case: CS0069226 – opened and unassigned

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged



## Case

**Short Description:** Support for HCPSS Operating Budget

**Case Number:** CS0069226

**Case Opened:** 06-04-2025

**Constituent:**

[VIEW CASE](#)

**Details:**

**06-04-2025 12:46:31 PM EDT - Christiana Rigby** Additional comments

From: D L <logan215@gmail.com>  
Sent: Thursday, May 29, 2025 8:30 PM  
To: CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>; Ball, Calvin  
<cball@howardcountymd.gov>  
Subject: Please Increase Funding to Protect HCPSS Students & Teachers

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

Dear County Council Members and County Executive Ball,

I'm writing as a concerned parent and community member to urge you to increase funding for the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) in the FY26 budget.

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These educators and programs are critical to student growth, enrichment, and success. Cutting them will hurt our children — academically, emotionally, and creatively.

Please act now to fully fund HCPSS and protect our students, teachers, and schools.

Sincerely,

David Logan

8874 Blade Green Lane, Columbia, MD 21045

Parent of a Phelps Luck 1st and 3rd Grader

Ref:MSG6234428



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**From:** snap@howardcountymd.gov  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 12:47 PM  
**To:** bdsmith@howardcountymd.gov; ianderson@howardcountymd.gov;  
cgelwicks@howardcountymd.gov; cresspass@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Case: CS0069231 – opened and unassigned

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for follow up  
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## Case

**Short Description:** Support for HCPSS Operating Budget

**Case Number:** CS0069231

**Case Opened:** 06-04-2025

**Constituent:**

[VIEW CASE](#)

**Details:**

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**06-04-2025 12:46:33 PM EDT - Christiana Rigby** Additional comments

-----Original Message-----

From: Erin Knauer <epknauer@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, May 29, 2025 9:06 PM

To: CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>; Ball, Calvin  
<cball@howardcountymd.gov>

Subject: HCPSS \$9 million budget shortfall

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

To Whom This Concerns,

I am urging the County Council and County Executive Ball to pull \$9 million in funds from elsewhere and apply to the HCPSS budget. Education is paramount, it should never face budget cuts, especially in this day when certain political agendas are attempting to undermine our educational institutions and ensure an uneducated populace. I was a GT student and strings player in public school and I have fond memories of playing my violin. I look forward to sending my little one to a bright and well funded school when she comes of age, maybe even convincing her to play the violin (her dad was a brass kid). Please, please do not cut the vital programs and teaching positions you are considering to make up the \$9 million budget cut. Please prioritize the educational needs of our Howard County kids, which ensures bright futures in our community. I was a HoCo kid that grew up and stuck around my hometown because I love and value this County. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Residents of 4612 Broken Lute Way, Ellicott City, MD 21042

Erin and Tyler Boehmer

[howardcountymd.gov](http://howardcountymd.gov)



Ref:MSG6234433

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**From:** Jacquelyn DeBella <jacquelyndebella@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 29, 2025 11:29 AM  
**To:** BoE Email; Ball, Calvin; Bill Barnes; CouncilMail  
**Subject:** get creative-fully fund the budget!

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

Dear Dr. Ball, HCPSS BOE, Superintendent Barnes, Howard County County Council,

I have gathered you together again to see where we are on honesty and collaboration as far as fully funding the HCPSS budget. I am going to introduce a new word today -**creativity!** Let's get creative. As a teacher and a parent, I have to get creative all the time when there is no money!

Let me give you an examples:

Teaching in a title one school can be a challenge ! There is a lot of need.

1. I borrow instruments from other schools so my students can use them.
  2. I contact Howard County Parents for school music and get an instrument from the ECHO program (a program that upcycles used instruments so students have an instrument to play).
  3. I get music books from my former students who no longer use book 1 and have advanced to middle school.
- These are 3 creative and "green" solutions!

I went back and reviewed the testimony from council members Walsh and Jung. There were asks for money to be moved to the school budget from the capital budget , however now the county budget has "nearly \$10 million for Recreation and Parks capital projects". That was request to move the funding was voted down. My 14 year old loves pickleball but he seems to manage fine playing it on the current tennis courts. A half a million is a lot to spend on pickelball when there are lot of needs and HCPSS jobs are on the line. I just wondering if any of those recreational " wants" could be delayed.

I know a new library is being funded but its ironic that there is a scenario proposing cuts to elementary media paras and cuts to hs media staffing. We can fund a new county library **but** we can not fund the school employees who promote reading and support the public library? That doesn't make sense.

In addition, let's highlight the current situation for HCPSS employees:

1. The transfer window is closed so those who are cut have lost that option
2. Positions that are cut **can not** testify as there is no open testimony
3. The majority of the cuts **impact direct instruction** with students
4. The senarios **pit elementary and middle school** against each other
5. The senarios pit strings and gt vs middle school class size.
6. There are no scenarios for title one which is an equity issue.

My subject has been on the chopping block for 7 years. Seven years. The only reason I hear it is being cut is due to lack of funds and the blueprint. A blueprint should be a guideline for building. It should not compromise the foundation of something that is successful and strong. I would like to request a review of who represnted music in the writing of the blueprint and how that was captured. I strongly believe areas of the blueprint need to be revised and Howard County granted more funding based on our increased needed with our ESOL students and Special Education needs.

I also question why is the cherished teaching and para staff always the cut? Are we looking at field trips, materials of instruction, central office staff? I do not think anyone truly understands the role everyone at a school plays. No one is "extra" . The scenarios have stirred up the social media frenzy to new levels. **Everything, every program, and every human on the HCPSS cut lists is needed.**

I am asking again for clarity, collaboration, honesty, creativity. Do not go forward with those cuts if you want a world class education system, if you want families to remain here, if you want a good and stable community, and if you want a safe community with low crime. That begins and ends with the schools.

### **Find the funding!**

Sincerely,  
Jacquelyn DeBella  
solution seeker  
mom  
\*Creative\*  
Teacher at at title one school  
Music Teacher  
Volunteer  
Resident of over 20 year

---

**From:** Jhonna Seifert <jhonna27@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 29, 2025 7:52 PM  
**To:** Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Make it right -fund ALL of HCPSS

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

Dear County Council members & Dr. Ball,

Who is there when students give up on themselves? Teachers are.

Who gives unconditional love to our children? Teachers do.

Research shows with **better education**, we see greater civic engagement and **reduced crime rate**. We see improved economic standings, personal growth and health benefits that lead to a longer life. Education leads to positive **environment sustainability**.

PLEASE work on ways to increase the budget so that TEACHERS do NOT lose their jobs or current positions!!

It is OUR responsibility to ensure our children's education is everything they need!

I have 2 children & 4 nieces that are currently enrolled in HCPSS system.

I proudly paid my taxes that primarily finance our school system. My taxes seem to increase steadily each year yet each year I am forced to BEG to use the increases to Fund our Education system as they are required to do!

How EMBARRASSING and SAD that our Children's Education is NOT our PRIORITY?!

Someone that has a doctorate in education would understand.

Is each student not worth an extra \$150 for the year? Do the math.

Our Children need both their primary teachers and their GT teachers in order to help them maintain and build upon their skills and knowledge!!!

Do the right thing - save our Teachers !!! By doing so, we are Gifting our Children the Future they deserve and we are Obligated to give them !!!

Sincerely,  
Jhonna Seifert

---

**From:** onyinye ukoha <uann09@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 29, 2025 4:55 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Please Increase Funding to Protect HCPSS Students & Teachers

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

Dear County Council Members and County Executive Ball,

I'm writing as a concerned parent and community member to urge you to increase funding for the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) in the FY26 budget.

Right now, our schools face a shortfall of over \$9 million, and proposed cuts will devastate elementary education in particular. These include:

Elimination of 42 elementary media paraeducators

Reduction of 39 elementary Gifted & Talented educators

Cutting 12 positions from the 3rd grade strings program

Elimination of nearly 17 additional elementary teaching positions

These educators and programs are critical to student growth, enrichment, and success. Cutting them will hurt our children — academically, emotionally, and creatively.

Please act now to fully fund HCPSS and protect our students, teachers, and schools.

Sincerely,

Onyinye Ann Ukoha

21045

parent of a Kindergarten and 2nd grade student at Phelps luck Elementary school.

---

**From:** Sandra Jones <sschurman426@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 29, 2025 12:20 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** FY26 School Budget

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

Dear County Executive Ball, HCPSS School Board of Education, and Superintendent Barnes,

I am writing to express my most sincere plea that you NOT continue with the almost \$9M proposed cuts that could affect 39 Gifted & Talented Educators and 12 Third Grade Strings Teachers. As a family that moved to Howard county 2 years ago for its schools and programs, we need to preserve these GT and music. The classrooms are maxed out, and to cut enrichment programs is such a disservice to our children. Having programs that can nurture our children's growth is what will build the foundation blocks for them to become leaders in our community. Please preserve these elementary school programs.

Sincerely,

Sandra Jones

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**From:** tara hixson <tarahixson@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 29, 2025 2:20 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** Please Increase Funding to Protect HCPSS Students & Teachers

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

Dear County Council Members and County Executive Ball,

I'm writing as a concerned parent and community member to urge you to increase funding for the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) in the FY26 budget.

Right now, our schools face a shortfall of over \$9 million, and proposed cuts will devastate elementary education in particular. These include:

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These educators and programs are critical to student growth, enrichment, and success. Cutting them will hurt our children — academically, emotionally, and creatively.

Please act now to fully fund HCPSS and protect our students, teachers, and schools.

Sincerely,

Tara Hixson

5411 Chatterbird Pl. Columbia 21045

Parent of a Phelps Luck 3rd Grader and Kindergartener



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**From:** Anthony DeBella <jhu1996@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 30, 2025 5:33 PM  
**To:** Ball, Calvin; Ahmad, Yousuf; CouncilMail; boe@hcpss.org; Bill Barnes; Darin Conforti; Brian Hull  
**Subject:** Thoughts on FY26 HCPSS Budget Impasse  
**Attachments:** Call for Public Education Conversation.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.]

Formalizing what we sent this morning.

I appreciate everyone's efforts to make this all work on thin margins, but in short, HCPSS stakeholders don't have authoritative data with which to participate in the fund balance conversation between the County Executive and the Board of Education the way an educated populace should. The disagreement over the availability and usage of the fund balances leaves important elements of the curriculum vulnerable to cuts, with the teachers and students hanging in the balance. The mere specter of budget cuts is already damaging the reputation of Howard County Schools to the point where we are hearing reports of new college graduates already avoiding applying to HCPSS' vacant positions due to the recurring discussions on staff reductions.

Respectfully,  
Anthony DeBella  
Laurel, MD 20723

In a May 20 letter County Executive Ball assured the Board of Education his adjusted allocation of money for HCPSS would be sufficient to cover a same services level budget outlined by the Superintendent due to the availability of surplus HCPSS funds. The County Council voted down amendments adding additional funds to support HCPSS based at least partly on the County Executive's letter and demonstrated commitment to funding HCPSS. At the May 27 Board of Education budget work session, Superintendent Barnes described how use of the fund balances proposed by the County Executive were not available to cover current services in the FY26 operating budget. Importantly, this account of fund balances was more in line with estimates provided by Board of Education staff at the County Council's last work session of May 16.

Cutting over 100 HCPSS teachers and staff due to the \$9M gap in fund balance "differences in opinion" is unacceptable. Either the money was, is, and always has been available or it was never enough to begin with. Why is the County Executive saying one thing and the Board of Education another? Why are two different sets of numbers being used to discuss the same budget?

Lack of transparency into the budgeting process has left parents, teachers, and staff feeling burned by a system that gaslights us into believing we have enough money to preserve class sizes and jobs while the very next day there is discussion about the elimination of whole programs. The public deserves clear, authoritative financial information on which to base informed judgments about the trajectory of the educational system we are collectively responsible for. This situation with different public officials making different conclusions about the same fund balance has to end.

Every member of county leadership who claims to support funding the schools to their current levels of service must work to avoid further damaging the public school system, which saw class sizes increases and staff reductions during last year's budget debates. This is just deja vu that we fear will be repeated next year. We think there are immediate needs that have to be addressed and systemic changes that must occur:

1. Howard County leaders, BOE, and HCPSS should hold a town hall solely around education whereby each can finally agree on one set of numbers. We have to begin that open conversation Council Member Rigby called for shortly after the budget passed, sooner rather than later. We expect Howard County to respond with a plan and not with charts and graphics that don't tell the whole story.

2. The Board of Education should assume more risk in any fund balances. This was an option given to the BOE on May 27th, and they should take it. To a great extent, it doesn't matter if the fund balances are lower than the County Executive wrote. Parents, teachers, and staff cannot have two years of continuing staffing reductions and expect that the system is not at a tipping point, and close to falling off a cliff. HCPSS' reputation for educational excellence is literally on the line. Unless sufficient funds are committed to HCPSS now and in the future, newly graduated teachers will not want to work for a system continually looking to cut the most

recently hired staff. Howard County itself takes the large tax base of parents for granted, and it should not anymore.

3. In the interests of transparency, the Board of Education should hold a new public hearing on its budget. The budget is not the same one the public testified to earlier this year. Stakeholders deserve a voice.

4. County Executive Ball has said repeatedly in multiple memos to the BOE: "I also want to reiterate my strong commitment to ensure that the health benefit expenses of the school system are met and that the HCPSS Health Fund remains solvent." We appreciate Dr. Ball's commitment to the health of HCPSS employees but also strongly suggest this be put in a legally-binding memorandum of understanding (MOU). We believe doing this guarantees responsible fiscal practices of both Howard County government and HCPSS. This creates a level of certainty the BOE should use to draw down on the fund balance and act in the best interests of over 57,500 students at HCPSS.

Thank you,

Howard County Education Coalition Members

Anthony DeBella  
Ryan Powers  
Jhonna Siefert  
Corinne Happel, MD  
Jade Chang  
Torie Grant

---

**From:** D L <logan215@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 29, 2025 8:30 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** Please Increase Funding to Protect HCPSS Students & Teachers

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

Dear County Council Members and County Executive Ball,

I'm writing as a concerned parent and community member to urge you to increase funding for the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) in the FY26 budget.

Right now, our schools face a shortfall of over \$9 million, and proposed cuts will devastate elementary education in particular. These include:

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These educators and programs are critical to student growth, enrichment, and success. Cutting them will hurt our children — academically, emotionally, and creatively.

Please act now to fully fund HCPSS and protect our students, teachers, and schools.

Sincerely,

David Logan

8874 Blade Green Lane, Columbia, MD 21045

Parent of a Phelps Luck 1st and 3rd Grader

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**From:** Emily Braman <esbraman@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 30, 2025 10:10 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** URGENT: Please fully fund HCPSS

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

Dear County Council Members and County Executive,

I am writing to you once again to urge full funding of the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) operating budget and to eliminate the proposed cuts that will harm students and schools. Some of these cuts include:

- Reducing Gifted and Talented (GT) instruction in elementary schools
- Eliminating many paraeducators, who are critical to classroom success
- Increasing class sizes in middle and high schools

GT programs are essential at the elementary level to challenge and support high-achieving students, fostering academic growth early on. Paraeducators play an invaluable role in helping teachers manage classrooms and ensuring students get the attention they need. **Increasing class sizes—already too large—is unacceptable; larger classes reduce individualized instruction and negatively impact student outcomes.** Also, the removal of third-grade string programs eliminates early access to music education, which is proven to support cognitive and emotional development.

Our schools need your support. Howard County prides itself on strong public education, but without full funding, we will see diminished resources, overwhelmed educators, and students who do not receive the education they deserve. Please ensure the HCPSS operating budget is fully funded to protect our students, teachers, and the quality of education in our county.

I urge you to act now for the future of Howard County's children. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,

Emily Braman

--

Emily Braman, MS, OTR/L  
Pediatric Occupational Therapist

**CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE:** This e-mail communication and any attachments may contain confidential and privileged information for the use of the designated recipients. If you are not the intended recipient, (or authorized to receive for the recipient) you are hereby notified that you have received this

communication in error and that any review, disclosure, dissemination, distribution or copying of it or its contents is prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please destroy all copies of this communication and any attachments and contact the sender by reply e-mail.

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**From:** Erin Knauer <epknauer@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 29, 2025 9:06 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** HCPSS \$9 million budget shortfall

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

To Whom This Concerns,

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Residents of 4612 Broken Lute Way, Ellicott City, MD 21042

Erin and Tyler Boehmer

---

**From:** Kate Abowd Johnson <kate.abowd@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 31, 2025 7:21 PM  
**To:** Ball, Calvin; Ahmad, Yousuf; Thompson, Paul; CouncilMail; boe@hcpss.org; Office Board  
**Subject:** Education must have transparency and be funded

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

Dear Howard County Elected Officials,

In a May 20 letter County Executive Ball assured the Board of Education his adjusted allocation of money for HCPSS would be sufficient to cover a same services level budget outlined by the Superintendent due to the availability of surplus HCPSS funds. The County Council voted down amendments adding additional funds to support HCPSS based at least partly on the County Executive's letter and demonstrated commitment to funding HCPSS. At the May 27 Board of Education budget work session, Superintendent Barnes described how use of the fund balances proposed by the County Executive were not available to cover current services in the FY26 operating budget. Importantly, this account of fund balances was more in line with estimates provided by Board of Education staff at the County Council's last work session of May 16.

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Lack of transparency into the budgeting process has left parents, teachers, and staff feeling burned by a system that gaslights us into believing we have enough money to preserve class sizes and jobs while the very next day there is discussion about the elimination of whole programs. The public deserves clear, authoritative financial information on which to base informed judgments about the trajectory of the educational system we are collectively responsible for. This situation with different public officials making different conclusions about the same fund balance has to end.

Every member of county leadership who claims to support funding the schools to their current levels of service must work to avoid further damaging the public school system, which saw class sizes increases and staff reductions during last year’s budget debates. This is just deja vu that we fear will be repeated next year. We think there are immediate needs that have to be addressed and systemic changes that must occur:

1. Howard County leaders, BOE, and HCPSS should hold a town hall solely around education whereby each can finally agree on one set of numbers. We have to begin that open conversation Council Member Rigby called for shortly after the budget passed, sooner rather than later. We expect Howard County to respond with a plan and not with charts and graphics that don’t tell the whole story.
2. The Board of Education should assume more risk in any fund balances. This was an option given to the BOE on May 27th, and they should take it. To a great extent, it doesn’t matter if the fund balances are



lower than the County Executive wrote. Parents, teachers, and staff cannot have two years of continuing staffing reductions and expect that the system is not at a tipping point, and close to falling off a cliff. HCPSS' reputation for educational excellence is literally on the line. Unless sufficient funds are committed to HCPSS now and in the future, newly graduated teachers will not want to work for a system continually looking to cut the most recently hired staff. Howard County itself takes the large tax base of parents for granted, and it should not anymore.

3. In the interests of transparency, the Board of Education should hold a new public hearing on its budget. The budget is not the same one the public testified to earlier this year. Stakeholders deserve a voice.

4. County Executive Ball has said repeatedly in multiple memos to the BOE: "I also want to reiterate my strong commitment to ensure that the health benefit expenses of the school system are met and that the HCPSS Health Fund remains solvent." We appreciate Dr. Ball's commitment to the health of HCPSS employees but also strongly suggest this be put in a legally-binding memorandum of understanding (MOU). We believe doing this guarantees responsible fiscal practices of both Howard County government and HCPSS. This creates a level of certainty the BOE should use to draw down on the fund balance and act in the best interests of over 57,500 students at HCPSS.

Thank you,  
Kate Johnson  
Howard County homeowner and parent of two HCPSS students

---

**From:** stephanie traino <stephasicilia@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 31, 2025 12:38 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** Avoid cuts

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

Hello please add funds for HCPSS , please don't cut valuable programs and teachers and para educators from the budgets, they are needed and give hcpss students and staff the extra care in learning and enjoying their education without stress , thank you, stephanie

---

**From:** snap@howardcountymd.gov  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 12:49 PM  
**To:** bdsmith@howardcountymd.gov; ianderson@howardcountymd.gov;  
cgelwicks@howardcountymd.gov; cresspass@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Case: CS0069234 – opened and unassigned

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged



## Case

**Short Description:** Support for HCPSS Operating Budget

**Case Number:** CS0069234

**Case Opened:** 06-04-2025

**Constituent:**

[VIEW CASE](#)

**Details:**

**06-04-2025 12:49:02 PM EDT - Christiana Rigby** Additional comments

From: Carol Levin <thelevins@comcast.net>  
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 6:38 PM  
To: Rigby, Christiana <crigby@howardcountymd.gov>  
Subject: One quick question about our School budget

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

County Councilperson Christiana Rigby,

Dear County Executive Ball and County Council members,

Right now HCPSS is staring down a \$29 million hole in its budget that it cannot fill. County Executive Ball sent educators a list of reasons why he can't fully fund schools, but I still have one question for him and for the County Council:

\*What would you cut from HCPSS?\*

It's easy to cut school funding and leave the hard choices to the Board of Education. But if you think HCPSS should have no additional funding this year, then how much would you raise class size? Which programs would you eliminate? How many staff should be laid off? Should you freeze pay increases for educators during a teacher shortage?

If you can't, or won't answer those questions, then do the right thing and restore the funding that HCPSS students and educators deserve.

Thank you,

Carol Levin  
thelevins@comcast.net<mailto:thelevins@comcast.net>  
9747 Knowledge Dr  
Laurel, Maryland 20723

howardcountymd.gov



Ref:MSG6234462

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**From:** Marisa Goyer <marisagoyer@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 2, 2025 9:15 PM  
**To:** board@hcpss.org  
**Cc:** CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** Budget Reduction Concerns

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

Dear Elected Officials,

I am a parent of a Bonnie Branch Middle school student and a concerned member of the Howard County community. I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

Please preserve the essential programs and services that directly impact students. Increasing class sizes for middle school and high school for a second year in a row is a major concern. Class sizes should be maintained at all levels.

Additionally, it is very important to preserve the Leadership Intern position at Bonnie Branch. This position was added for the 2024-25 school year in response to escalating student issues and significant parental concerns. While some improvements have been noted by parents and staff, problems still exist that need consistent attention by the school administration. The issues will just get worse if there are not enough administrators onsite.

To achieve fiscal responsibility, please find additional reductions in non-school based expenses. I also ask all elected officials to continue to work together to find additional revenues and creative solutions for our students.

Sincerely,  
Marisa Goyer

---

**From:** Rebekah Perillo  
**Sent:** Monday, June 2, 2025 5:02 PM  
**To:** councilmail@howardcountymd.gov; cball@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Urgent: Increase Funding for HCPSS to Prevent Devastating Cuts

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

Dear County Executive Ball and Members of the County Council,

I am writing to express my deep concern about the current funding shortfall facing the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). Without additional financial support from the county, our schools are facing painful cuts that will directly impact students, educators, and the quality of education in our community.

Howard County has long been recognized for its excellent public schools - a key reason many families choose to live here. We cannot allow this legacy to erode due to inadequate funding. Class sizes are already growing, critical programs are at risk, and our educators are being asked to do more with less.

I urge you to prioritize our children and public education by increasing the county's contribution to HCPSS in the upcoming budget. Now is the time to invest in our schools, our students, and our future.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. I hope you will act to ensure that Howard County remains a leader in education.

Sincerely,  
Rebekah Perillo  
Current HCPSS Parent and Former HCPSS Student

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**From:** snap@howardcountymd.gov  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 12:49 PM  
**To:** bdsmith@howardcountymd.gov; ianderson@howardcountymd.gov;  
cgelwicks@howardcountymd.gov; cresspass@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Case: CS0069239 – opened and unassigned

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged



## Case

**Short Description:** Support for HCPSS Operating Budget

**Case Number:** CS0069239

**Case Opened:** 06-04-2025

**Constituent:**

[VIEW CASE](#)

**Details:**

**06-04-2025 12:49:14 PM EDT - Christiana Rigby** Additional comments

From: Samantha Stefan <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>  
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 9:01 PM  
To: Rigby, Christiana <crigby@howardcountymd.gov>  
Subject: One quick question about our School budget

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

County Councilperson Christiana Rigby,

Dear County Executive Ball and County Council members,

Right now HCPSS is staring down a \$29 million hole in its budget that it cannot fill. County Executive Ball sent educators a list of reasons why he can't fully fund schools, but I still have one question for him and for the County Council:

\*What would you cut from HCPSS?\*

It's easy to cut school funding and leave the hard choices to the Board of Education. But if you think HCPSS should have no additional funding this year, then how much would you raise class size? Which programs would you eliminate? How many staff should be laid off? Should you freeze pay increases for educators during a teacher shortage?

If you can't, or won't answer those questions, then do the right thing and restore the funding that HCPSS students and educators deserve.

Thank you,  
Samantha Stefan  
SJLES Special Educator and Case Manager

Samantha Stefan  
sammie.stefan@gmail.com<mailto:sammie.stefan@gmail.com>  
6345 Early Red Ct  
Columbia, Maryland 21045

howardcountymd.gov



Ref:MSG6234469



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**From:** Ale Montoya  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 3, 2025 4:02 PM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org  
**Cc:** councilmail@howardcountymd.gov; cball@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Budget Reductions

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for 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 Elected Officials,

I am a parent of a Bonnie Branch Middle school student and a concerned member of the Howard County community. I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

Increasing class sizes for middle school and high school for a second year in a row is unacceptable. Maintain class sizes at all levels.

Additionally, it is critically important to preserve the Leadership Intern position at Bonnie Branch. This position was added for the 2024-25 school year in response to escalating student issues and significant parental concerns. This role is still very much needed.

To balance the budget, please find additional reductions in non-school based expenses.

I also ask all elected officials to continue to work together to find additional revenues and creative solutions for our students.

Sincerely,  
Alejandra Montoya

Sent from my iPhone

---

**From:** Aparna <ms.aparna@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 3, 2025 5:48 AM  
**To:** board@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** Protect our Democracy!

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

Our children represent the future of America. Without a solid and full education, we run the risk of continually electing Fascists to run our nation. Educating our children is the strongest DEFENSE.

Please fully fund our MUSIC program, our ACADEMICS and Advanced classes, our STEM and robotics, good humanities and history and law classes --- if we have to make cuts, make it to Sports. We don't need more jocks; we need extremely literate children to FIGHT for democracy and the Rule of Law and to save our nation from devolving into dictatorship.

Aparna Srinivasan  
HCPSS Parent of 3

---

**From:** Colleen Kupferschmidt  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 3, 2025 1:04 PM  
**To:** councilmail@howardcountymd.gov; cball@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Restore Full Funding to HCPSS in FY26

[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 and Mr. Calvin Ball,

I'm writing as a concerned parent to urge you to fully fund the Howard County Public School System in the FY26 Operating Budget.

HCPSS has faced years of underfunding. This year, the system needs \$29.2 million just to maintain current services. **Without it, we'll see larger class sizes, fewer programs, and staff layoffs — all of which hurt our students.**

It's unacceptable that our schools are the first to face cuts when budgets tighten. Education is a core service and should be protected, not sacrificed. The percentage of Howard County Public Schools System share of the recurring General Fund Revenue has not kept up with historic norms and inflation.

My child's school is already stretched thin. We cannot afford more cuts.

Please prioritize students and restore funding to HCPSS.

Thank you,

Colleen Kupferschmidt  
Howard county resident and parent of two children at Manor Woods Elementary School

---

**From:** Connie Van Valkenburgh  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 3, 2025 2:20 PM  
**To:** councilmail@howardcountymd.gov; cball@howardcountymd.gov; board@hcpss.org  
**Subject:** Community Input on Remaining \$9M Budget Reductions

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for 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 Members of the Howard County Board of Education,

As a concerned member of the Howard County community, I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

I urge you to preserve essential programs and services that directly impact students: 3rd grade strings, G/T Elementary Schools

To achieve fiscal responsibility, I suggest considering holding off on raises for staff. It's not exactly nice to see the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, General Council, et al. get raises year to year while discussing budget cuts for our kids.

Thank you for your continued commitment to transparency and student-centered decisions.

Sincerely,  
Connie Van Valkenburgh  
Northfield Elementary School parent  
443-621-5490



Virus-free. [www.avast.com](https://www.avast.com)

---

**From:** Daljit Soni  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 3, 2025 3:52 PM  
**To:** board@hcpss.org  
**Cc:** councilmail@howardcountymd.gov; cball@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Community Input on Remaining \$9M Budget Reductions

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for 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 Members of the Board of Education:

As a concerned member of the Howard County community, I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

I urge you to preserve essential programs and services that directly impact students: special needs education (especially the para educators), GT programs and strings/orchestra programs.

To achieve fiscal responsibility, I suggest considering reductions in the following areas: contracted services, non-essential travel and administration costs.

Thank you for your continued commitment to transparency and student-centered decisions.

Sincerely,

Daljit Kaur Soni, Esq.  
Parent at Pointers run Elementary

---

**From:** F Keenan  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 3, 2025 5:20 PM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org; councilmail@howardcountymd.gov; cball@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Budget Shortfall: Preserve BBMS Leadership Intern, Maintain Class Sizes, Find Additional Revenue

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for 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 Elected Officials,

As a concerned parent of Bonnie Branch Middle School students and a resident of Howard County, I am writing to provide my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

It is crucial that we preserve essential programs and services that directly affect our students. I strongly urge you to **reconsider any measures that would increase class sizes at the middle and high school levels** for a second consecutive year. Maintaining appropriate class sizes at all levels is paramount. Research consistently indicates that an optimal secondary class size falls between 15 and 20 students, and that learning quality diminishes as class sizes grow. Many of our middle school classrooms, locker rooms, and cafeterias are already operating at or beyond capacity. I respectfully request that you visit several of our local schools to witness these conditions firsthand.

Furthermore, **the preservation of the Leadership Intern position at Bonnie Branch is critically important.** This position was created for the 2024-25 school year in response to increasing student issues and significant concerns raised by parents. Many frustrated parents advocated for this additional administrative support at the school. While parents and staff have observed positive changes, ongoing challenges necessitate consistent attention from the school administration.

I ask that you explore **additional reductions in non-school-based expenditures.** I also urge all elected officials to **continue collaborating to identify additional revenue streams and innovative solutions** that will benefit our students.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of these important matters.

Sincerely,  
Frances Keenan  
D1

---

**From:** Jacquelyn DeBella  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 3, 2025 12:51 PM  
**To:** Calvin Ball; councilmail@howardcountymd.gov; BoE Email; Bill Barnes  
**Subject:** Careful the things you say... children will listen

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

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

Congratulations on chaos. You have achieved it. As well as distrust from the public.

Right now, my daughter is in a production of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. It is a modernized version of book. It takes us through all the trappings like being greedy, being a social media "pop" star, wanting it all, and a technology addict. The budget cycle is truly like the Wonka cautionary tale. Maybe if everyone had **worked together** we could have all had a piece of the chocolate factory (the chocolate factory is the budget in this story)

If you want to emerge as the "Charlie" in this story

**-Agree to use the fund balance and Dr. Ball agrees to repay in after July 2 as per his emails to the public**

-Keep the oompa loompas happy and employed (HCPSS employees who run "the factory")

-Continue to create "Pure imagination" with the fine arts and GT seminars

-Keep the "Wonka" reputation as the BEST by providing high quality education

Don't fall into the traps like Augustus, Violet, Veruca and Mike TV.

***People over Politics***

Students need:

-academic enrichment like GT seminars and 3rd grade strings

-room to learn (don't increase class sizes)

-a clean and healthy environment (maintain custodians and restore overtime)

-Consistent and highly trained staff and paras (do not cut staff)

-media staff to educate about the library

**If you are unwilling to use the fund balance, Dr. Ball and County Council, respectfully, you have to go back into your budget and give up some things.**

It is not fair to always tell the school system no but say yes to:

-pickleball

-bike trails

-a luxury library when we have a ton of libraries and they are all top notch (and remove media staff or reduce them in HCPSS)

-an arts center (and defund 3rd grade strings)

Sondeim said it best "Careful the things you say, children will listen". They are listening and testifying and will be voting. The children will remember.

Thank you!

Mrs. DeBella  
Champion for education

---

**From:** Katie  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 3, 2025 5:27 PM  
**To:** councilmail@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Fully Fund Our Schools

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for 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 Members of the County Council,

The fact that the Howard County Public School System is continuing to face a budget crisis year after year is upsetting to say the least. I say this as a current and lifelong resident of Howard County.

Howard County has always been known for having amazing SCHOOLS. However, if you go through with these proposed budget cuts, your actions will reduce the quality of education without question.

- As my husband and I are getting ready to start a family, we are having conversations with each other and suggesting to everyone we know to move to a school system that does not have a continued budget crisis and does not continue to threaten the programs that elevate our students in all aspects of their education.
- Why should our students and staff continue to suffer from the mistakes of a previous superintendent who created the initial deficit (Renee Foose) and why has the county not fixed the deficit from the pandemic in the last 5 years? This county has a lot of money to work with. Raising taxes temporarily or even has a one-time or two-time payment to cover the deficit is something that many parents have told me they would be more than happy to do. If you send out a survey, I think you would find this as well.
- Housing prices in this county are astoundingly high and continue to rise because of the reputation of the SCHOOLS. But if the budget problems continue to strip away programs that are deemed "not essential," aka that which makes us great, housing prices will drop and the value of a "Howard County education" will plummet to levels we cannot come back from.
- The actions of the county executive and council over the last 5 years or so show more of a priority of letting housing developers and businesses fill every square inch of free space AND giving them tax credits. Our county should not provide our school system with what it needs to barely get by but provide what it needs to make our school system the best around. More of the county budget needs to get put back into the schools. How many county-funded committees, activities, and construction have been deemed absolutely necessary and essential?



Last spring, there was a tremendous showing last year from students, parents, and staff demonstrating how important music education, GT education, and more is to our communities, yet they are once again on the chopping block. How? We already showed you how much our community values these things.

- Howard County has been voted one of the NATION'S best counties for Music Education for the 10<sup>th</sup> year in a row, but you reward the hard work and dedication of those music teachers by reducing music positions? Music is a CURRICULAR subject and should be in order to produce well-rounded students.
- As someone who also values sports for all youth, a lot of county funding is going towards sports programs that are EXTRA-curricular. Taking away music staffing so you can add more athletic trainers is like a slap in the face to your music teachers. Music teacher morale continues to drop because of this lack of support, which will make excellent teachers leave the county.
- Taking away money from the curricular music assessments to use for sports or other things is inequitable and unfair. Students in the entire county gain so much from having the experience of our Music Assessments each year.
- Both HCPSS Teachers of the Year for this past school year were music teachers. Both of them.
- Removing programs like 3rd Grade Strings will reduce ALL levels of music education in Howard County. Removing 3rd grade strings is like cutting the roots of a tree and being surprised when the branches die. Students who participate in 3rd Grade Strings (at EVERY elementary school) learn skills that they will use in the years to come. In 4<sup>th</sup> grade, students can choose to continue their string instrument, switch to a band instrument, or join Chorus. If they switch to Band or Chorus, they will already know how to read music and rhythm, how to rehearse as a group and work with others as a team, how to perform their own musical part while other sections of the orchestra play theirs, and already have valuable concert experience and performing experience. Removing 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade strings means that students will have to learn all of these skills for the first time in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, which means they will arrive at middle school knowing LESS than they would have if they had started a year earlier. Each subsequent year that does not receive education from 3rd Grade Strings will trickle down to our top musical groups in high school and will reduce the level of playing of even our highest caliber ensembles. Howard County will no longer be known as a good county for music; Anne Arundel County and Montgomery County will take that torch.

As the school system is looking for ways to save money, it would be helpful to have more transparency and see a break-down of how many positions and the salaries in both Central Office and the "higher ups."

- How many area superintendents make more than \$100,000? \$200,000?
- Are all of these positions ESSENTIAL to student learning and our school system? Are they more essential than hiring a few more teachers to decrease class sizes? Reduced number of class sizes makes all the difference in student education so that each student can get what they need from their teacher.
- Do Central Office staff and area superintendents have yearly evaluations like teachers do where they have to show the impact they are making each year?

Howard County used to be extremely competitive to apply to as a teacher. When I was a student growing up in Howard County, hiring a teacher straight out of college was almost unheard of. Hundreds of applicants would apply for a handful of positions, but they would only get hired if they had many years of experience, multiple degrees, and demonstrated successful classroom management, etc.

- But now, the county is hiring an incredible amount of new teachers (I can only assume to save money on salary and benefits) who do not have teaching experience and do not have classroom management skills. This leads to burnout, which leads to having to hire more teachers who also do not have experience or expertise, which leads to more burnout. It is a vicious cycle, as the county is already starting to see in schools of lower socio-economic income.

Questions:

How often is the school system budget audited? Is there a requirement for this stated in our policies? How often is the budget for the county audited? Is there a requirement for this stated in our policies / laws?

I beg you to fully fund this year's requested school budget and give a larger percentage of money from the county back to the schools so that the quality of education does not continue to drop to levels we cannot come back from. We are currently riding on the tails of reputation earned from years ago. We cannot continue at this rate.

---

**From:** snap@howardcountymd.gov  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 12:52 PM  
**To:** bdsmith@howardcountymd.gov; ianderson@howardcountymd.gov;  
cgelwicks@howardcountymd.gov; cresspass@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Case: CS0069248 – opened and unassigned

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged



## Case

**Short Description:** Support for HCPSS Operating Budget

**Case Number:** CS0069248

**Case Opened:** 06-04-2025

**Constituent:**

[VIEW CASE](#)

**Details:**

**06-04-2025 12:51:45 PM EDT - Christiana Rigby** Additional comments

From: Katie <katie.jaye.hunt@gmail.com>  
Sent: Tuesday, June 3, 2025 5:27 PM  
To: CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>  
Subject: Fully Fund Our Schools

[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 County Council,

The fact that the Howard County Public School System is continuing to face a budget crisis year after year is upsetting to say the least. I say this as a current and lifelong resident of Howard County.

Howard County has always been known for having amazing SCHOOLS. However, if you go through with these proposed budget cuts, your actions will reduce the quality of education without question.

\* As my husband and I are getting ready to start a family, we are having conversations with each other and suggesting to everyone we know to move to a school system that does not have a continued budget crisis and does not continue to threaten the programs that elevate our students in all aspects of their education.

\* Why should our students and staff continue to suffer from the mistakes of a previous superintendent who created the initial deficit (Renee Foose) and why has the county not fixed the deficit from the pandemic in the last 5 years? This county has a lot of money to work with. Raising taxes temporarily or even has a one-time or two-time payment to cover the deficit is something that many parents have told me they would be more than happy to do. If you send out a survey, I think you would find this as well.

\* Housing prices in this county are astoundingly high and continue to rise because of the reputation of the SCHOOLS. But if the budget problems continue to strip away programs that are deemed "not essential," aka that which makes us great, housing prices will drop and the value of a "Howard County education" will plummet to levels we cannot come back from.

\* The actions of the county executive and council over the last 5 years or so show more of a priority of letting housing developers and businesses fill every square inch of free space AND giving them tax credits. Our county should not provide our school system with what it needs to barely get by but provide what it needs to make our school system the best around. More of the county budget needs to get put back into the schools. How many county-funded committees, activities, and construction have been deemed absolutely necessary and essential?

Last spring, there was a tremendous showing last year from students, parents, and staff demonstrating how important music education, GT education, and more is to our communities, yet they are once again on the chopping block. How? We already showed you how much our community values these things.

\* Howard County has been voted one of the NATION'S best counties for Music Education for the 10th year in a row, but you reward the hard work and dedication of those music teachers by reducing music positions? Music is a CURRICULAR subject and should be in order to produce well-rounded students.

\* As someone who also values sports for all youth, a lot of county funding is going towards sports programs that are EXTRA-curricular. Taking away

music staffing so you can add more athletic trainers is like a slap in the face to your music teachers. Music teacher morale continues to drop because of this lack of support, which will make excellent teachers leave the county.

- \* Taking away money from the curricular music assessments to use for sports or other things is inequitable and unfair. Students in the entire county gain so much from having the experience of our Music Assessments each year.

- \* Both HCPSS Teachers of the Year for this past school year were music teachers. Both of them.

- \* Removing programs like 3rd Grade Strings will reduce ALL levels of music education in Howard County. Removing 3rd grade strings is like cutting the roots of a tree and being surprised when the branches die. Students who participate in 3rd Grade Strings (at EVERY elementary school) learn skills that they will use in the years to come. In 4th grade, students can choose to continue their string instrument, switch to a band instrument, or join Chorus. If they switch to Band or Chorus, they will already know how to read music and rhythm, how to rehearse as a group and work with others as a team, how to perform their own musical part while other sections of the orchestra play theirs, and already have valuable concert experience and performing experience. Removing 3rd Grade strings means that students will have to learn all of these skills for the first time in 4th grade, which means they will arrive at middle school knowing LESS than they would have if they had started a year earlier. Each subsequent year that does not receive education from 3rd Grade Strings will trickle down to our top musical groups in high school and will reduce the level of playing of even our highest caliber ensembles. Howard County will no longer be known as a good county for music; Anne Arundel County and Montgomery County will take that torch.

As the school system is looking for ways to save money, it would be helpful to have more transparency and see a break-down of how many positions and the salaries in both Central Office and the "higher ups."

- \* How many area superintendents make more than \$100,000? \$200,000?

- \* Are all of these positions ESSENTIAL to student learning and our school system? Are they more essential than hiring a few more teachers to decrease class sizes? Reduced number of class sizes makes all the difference in student education so that each student can get what they need from their teacher.

- \* Do Central Office staff and area superintendents have yearly evaluations like teachers do where they have to show the impact they are making each year?

Howard County used to be extremely competitive to apply to as a teacher. When I was a student growing up in Howard County, hiring a teacher straight out of college was almost unheard of. Hundreds of applicants would apply for a handful of positions, but they would only get hired if they had many years of experience, multiple degrees, and demonstrated successful classroom management, etc.

\* But now, the county is hiring an incredible amount of new teachers (I can only assume to save money on salary and benefits) who do not have teaching experience and do not have classroom management skills. This leads to burnout, which leads to having to hire more teachers who also do not have experience or expertise, which leads to more burnout. It is a vicious cycle, as the county is already starting to see in schools of lower socio-economic income.

Questions:

How often is the school system budget audited? Is there a requirement for this stated in our policies?

How often is the budget for the county audited? Is there a requirement for this stated in our policies / laws?

I beg you to fully fund this year's requested school budget and give a larger percentage of money from the county back to the schools so that the quality of education does not continue to drop to levels we cannot come back from. We are currently riding on the tails of reputation earned from years ago. We cannot continue at this rate.

[howardcountymd.gov](http://howardcountymd.gov)



Ref:MSG6234525

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**From:** Kelley Flesher <kelleyflesher@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 3, 2025 8:48 AM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org  
**Cc:** CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** HCPSS Budget

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

Dear Elected Officials,

I am a parent of a Bonnie Branch Middle school student and a concerned member of the Howard County community. I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

Increasing class sizes for middle school and high school for a second year in a row is unacceptable. Maintain class sizes at all levels.

Additionally, it is critically important to preserve the Leadership Intern position at Bonnie Branch. This position was added for the 2024-25 school year in response to escalating student issues and significant parental concerns. This role is still very much needed.

To balance the budget, please find additional reductions in non-school based expenses.

I also ask all elected officials to continue to work together to find additional revenues and creative solutions for our students.

Sincerely,  
Kelley Flesher  
8340 Glenmar Rd  
Ellicott City

---

**From:** Kelly Balchunas <kjbalchunas@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 3, 2025 6:38 AM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org; superintendent@hcpss.org  
**Cc:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Budget: do not cut media paraeducators and media specialists

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

It is extremely disappointing, and frankly embarrassing, that the Howard County Public School System proposes to cut media positions. It is disappointing and embarrassing that any student-facing positions are proposed for cuts.

The historic funding that Howard County Executive Calvin Ball is touting is false. Adjusted for inflation, funding is less than 5 years ago. In fact, when adjusted for inflation funding is less than surrounding counties.

Does it escape your attention that people move to Howard County due to the reputation of the school system? Why would people continue to move to Howard County, and pay 20-50% more for housing, when year after year more and more cuts to HCPSS staff and programs are proposed, affecting the education of their children?

Board members, are you aware what media specialists do? Have you spent any time in a school media center to understand their role? I have never once seen a BOE member at Mt. Hebron High School, and definitely not once have I seen any of you visit the media center.

In a high school media center, 2 FTE media specialists are necessary. Not one media specialist, and not one media specialist combined with a paraeducator. At Mt. Hebron High School, the media specialists are still teaching classes every class period of the day this late in the school year. They do not have planning periods and don't have dedicated lunch breaks. They teach every period of the day. And they field technical problems for students and educators, and teach students how to do research, and are crucial to supporting literacy for students. One media specialist at MHHS also teaches a film/video production class. What happens to the media center if there is only one media specialist and that person is not even in the media center because they are otherwise teaching? Did you know that the media specialists don't even have time to check out and shelve books? Student aides do that because the two media specialists are working with students all day. In elementary school, the media specialists and paraeducators are vital to supporting literacy goals and benchmarks. I have been a long-time substitute at the elementary level and I can tell you, classroom teachers cannot get students to reach these goals without the support of media curriculum.

I have been involved with HCPSS since 2013 and every single year, more funding, more programs, more staff are stripped away. It is not a better school system than it was in 2013. It is not even the same school system than it was then. It is more constrained with fewer resources, fewer staff, and fewer programs that benefit students. Literacy rates are not improving. And they surely won't improve by making the media center less accessible and less useful for students and educators.

Council members, you need to find the funding to support THE NUMBER ONE REASON people move to Howard County. Fully fund the HCPSS budget.

Board members, you need to be more in touch with what happens in schools day in and day out and make educators and student programs a priority in the budget.



Sincerely,  
Kelly Balchunas

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**From:** Lindsay Ullman  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 3, 2025 12:53 PM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org  
**Cc:** councilmail@howardcountymd.gov; cball@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** BOE Budget

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

Dear Elected Officials,

I am a parent of a Bonnie Branch Middle school student and a concerned member of the Howard County community. I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

Increasing class sizes for middle school and high school for a second year in a row is unacceptable. Maintain class sizes at all levels.

Additionally, it is critically important to preserve the Leadership Intern position at Bonnie Branch. This position was added for the 2024-25 school year in response to escalating student issues and significant parental concerns. This role is still very much needed.

To balance the budget, please find additional reductions in non-school based expenses.

I also ask all elected officials to continue to work together to find additional revenues and creative solutions for our students.

Sincerely,  
Lindsay Miller

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**From:** Nefise Alabulut Yavuzer  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 3, 2025 4:17 PM  
**To:** councilmail@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Please Protect Funding for HCPSS Programs

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for 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 Members of the Howard County Council,

My name is Nefise Yavuzer], and I am a [parent/teacher/community member] in Howard County. I'm writing to urge you to prioritize full funding for the Howard County Public School System and to prevent further reductions to the programs that make our schools exceptional.

Last year, the community came together to reverse harmful cuts to instrumental music, elementary GT, and other vital programs. It's deeply concerning to see those same programs once again facing the threat of elimination—especially after last year's increase in middle and high school class sizes already impacted staffing and access.

These programs are not extras—they are essential. They support the academic, creative, and social development of our children. They also reflect the values of a county that invests in the whole child and fosters excellence and equity across all schools.

Please use your authority to reallocate the necessary funding to HCPSS and help close the nearly \$30 million budget shortfall. Our teachers, students, and families are counting on your leadership.

Thank you for your time and your continued support of Howard County's students.

Sincerely,

***Be well,  
Nefise Yavuzer  
Pointers Run ES Proud Parent***

---

**From:** Alison Hickman  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 7:45 AM  
**To:** BoE Email; superintendent@hcpss.org  
**Cc:** councilmail@howardcountymd.gov; cball@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** HCPSS optional fees/ programs

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for 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.]

I am strongly against the suggestion by HCEA to add fees to optional programs. Are we a public school system or not? If we are, everything should be publicly funded. It's already a special system for the parents that fund their PTAs with tens of thousands of dollars a year- this doubles down on that.

This would perpetuate a school system for the haves and have nots, even if there is a sliding scale of some sorts. It also perpetuates defunding of public education.

**The whole county should experience the same free public education it deems worthy of funding.**

Insulating wealthy fee payers from the consequences of underfunding the school system just perpetuates the broken system we have. This underfunding results in wealthy PTAs creating curated environments and systems within a system. The Dayton Oaks PTA elementary fun run raised -\$63,489 this year per their donation page linked on their Facebook - a pretty typical amount for them. If you underfund orchestra, it won't be the Dayton Oaks of the county that have fewer cellists.

In what other business do we accept the mass donations of Kleenex as normal? This just adds orchestra to the same category as room decorations, enrichment activities sponsored by the PTA (during the school day!), teacher gifts, student events and Kleenex.

I do continued to think transportation is an area for savings improvement and measuring efficiency and necessity of expenses - I've long been skeptical of the marginal farms % changes impacted by bussing when compared to the investment required and the inconvenience in ride length. I'm also curious if there are any marginal adjustments to walk radiuses that make sense- for example moving elementary areas from for example 1 mile to 1.1 or 1.2 miles - are there any busses that would be eliminated?

Thank you for your continued service to our county. I remain hopeful that we invest in the school system at the level it needs given it is the draw as to why most people move here- it baffles me it's continually underinvested and our lunch program and class sizes are in the state they are in.

Sincerely,  
Alison Hickman

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**From:** Jennifer McDaniel Martin  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 12:07 PM  
**To:** board@hcpss.org  
**Cc:** councilmail@howardcountymd.gov; cball@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Prioritize Classrooms and Student Support in the FY26 HCPSS Budget

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for 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 Members of the Howard County Board of Education,

I'm writing to you not only as a concerned parent, but as someone who has spent time working in schools and understands the delicate balance of meeting students' diverse needs while navigating difficult financial decisions. As you approach the final hours of deliberation on the FY26 HCPSS budget, I respectfully urge you to prioritize classrooms, student services, and the educators who show up every day to nurture and challenge our children.

I am the proud mother of two young girls. My daughter Evelyn is a kindergartener at Thunder Hill Elementary, and my three-year-old, Lila, is currently receiving speech services through an IEP. The proposed cuts under consideration will directly affect both of them, along with thousands of other students in our county.

Evelyn is a bright, creative, and eager learner. She adores her teacher, Ms. Pratt, and her classroom has become a safe, joyful, and stimulating space for her. That kind of learning environment does not happen by accident — it requires reasonable class sizes, paraprofessional support, dedicated special education services, mental health resources, and access to programs like art, music, and Gifted and Talented enrichment. Every one of these things is on the chopping block, and it is heartbreaking.

Cuts to mental health services would be particularly devastating. Evelyn, like so many young children, has experienced significant anxiety navigating changes, especially as a military child and a kindergartener entering a new environment. The availability of mental health resources in schools isn't a luxury; it's a necessity. These services don't just help students cope — they help them thrive academically and socially.

Similarly, reductions in special education funding would jeopardize the early interventions that are vital for students like my younger daughter, Lila. The progress she's made through her speech IEP has been remarkable. Rolling back these services now would be short-sighted and would only lead to greater academic and social challenges for students later on.

I'm also deeply concerned about proposed cuts to Gifted and Talented programming. Gifted and Talented students — just like those receiving special education services — have the right to an education that meets their needs. Removing or reducing services denies these children the challenge and

enrichment they require. And as any educator can tell you, bored students are far more likely to disengage and develop behavior issues. Investing in appropriate programming for all learners helps maintain a positive, productive classroom environment.

And let's not overlook the importance of the arts. Music and visual art programs in elementary school are not optional "extras." They lay the foundation for cognitive development, creativity, discipline, and academic growth. These programs help students find their voice, build confidence, and, in many cases, discover passions that lead to future scholarships, careers, or lifelong creative pursuits. In fact, I participated in a career fair at Thunder Hill just last week. One of the prompts I was asked to respond to was, "What do I need to learn in school to do your job?" One of my responses was, "Art- to be creative and communicate ideas in ways that people will remember." These are our future teachers, businessmen, fashion designers (Evelyn's current plan). Let's empower them with the ability to explore and develop these skills.

I fully recognize the financial challenges our county faces, but I firmly believe that cuts should not come at the expense of students and classrooms. Before eliminating teachers, paraprofessionals, and essential student services, I urge the Board to take a hard look at administrative overhead, top-heavy leadership positions, non-essential travel, and other expenditures that **do not directly impact students**. The priority should be preserving what matters most: the people and programs inside our schools, working face to face with our children every single day.

Furthermore, I respectfully ask that you advocate alongside parents and educators for County Executive Calvin Ball to host a town hall immediately to work toward a funding solution. There's a \$9 million gap and it is imperative that leadership at every level comes together to protect what's most important. *Our kids can't wait.*

Tonight's decision isn't just about dollars. It's about the kind of schools, and the kind of future, we are building for our children. Evelyn, Lila, and every child in Howard County deserve to learn, grow, and be supported in schools that are fully staffed, mentally safe, and rich in opportunity. **Please prioritize our classrooms. Please protect our children's futures.**

Thank you for your time, your service, and your careful consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer McDaniel Martin  
Thunder Hill Elementary School Parent

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**From:** Joey Yeoh  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 6:30 AM  
**To:** cball@howardcountymd.gov; councilmail@howardcountymd.gov; Superintendent  
**Cc:** BoE Email  
**Subject:** Fully Fund Our Schools—Don't Cut Essential Programs

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for 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, Superintendent Barnes, and Howard County Council Members,

I'm writing to urge you to find a solution to fully fund our schools, one that does not involve cutting essential programs or educators.

In a time when teaching has become more challenging than ever, it is disheartening to see teachers and programs being pit against one another due to budget cuts. These cuts create division among educators who all share the same goal of supporting our students. Our positions and programs matter deeply to the students and community we serve. Having to justify the value of our work year after year is both exhausting and degrading.

If we do not receive full funding, the Board of Education will make devastating cuts, such as eliminating the 3rd grade orchestra program and GT teacher positions. These are the very programs that distinguish Howard County from the rest and contribute to its reputation for excellence in education.

Cutting teachers and programs is neither sustainable nor acceptable. Please do everything you can to prioritize funding for our schools and preserve the high-quality education our students deserve.

Sincerely,  
Joey Yeoh

---

**From:** Jonathan Flesher  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 2:22 PM  
**To:** councilmail@howardcountymd.gov  
**Cc:** cball@howardcounty.gov  
**Subject:** HCPSS Budget

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for 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 Elected Officials,

I am a parent of a Bonnie Branch Middle school student and a concerned member of the Howard County community. I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

Increasing class sizes for middle school and high school for a second year in a row is unacceptable. Maintain class sizes at all levels.

Additionally, it is critically important to preserve the Leadership Intern position at Bonnie Branch. This position was added for the 2024-25 school year in response to escalating student issues and significant parental concerns. This role is still very much needed.

To balance the budget, please find additional reductions in non-school based expenses.

I also ask all elected officials to continue to work together to find additional revenues and creative solutions for our students.

Sincerely,  
Jonathan Flesher



---

**From:** snap@howardcountymd.gov  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 12:55 PM  
**To:** bdsmith@howardcountymd.gov; ianderson@howardcountymd.gov;  
cgelwicks@howardcountymd.gov; cresspass@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Case: CS0069251 – opened and unassigned

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged



## Case

**Short Description:** Support for HCPSS Operating Budget

**Case Number:** CS0069251

**Case Opened:** 06-04-2025

**Constituent:**

[VIEW CASE](#)

**Details:**

**06-04-2025 12:54:01 PM EDT - Christiana Rigby** Additional comments

From: Molly Fieldsend <mollymcgintyotr@gmail.com>  
Sent: Wednesday, June 4, 2025 8:04 AM  
To: Ball, Calvin <cball@howardcountymd.gov>; boardoffice@hcpss.org;  
Rigby, Christiana <crigby@howardcountymd.gov>  
Subject:

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

Dear Howard County Elected Officials,

In a May 20 letter County Executive Ball assured the Board of Education his adjusted allocation of money for HCPSS would be sufficient to cover a

same services level budget outlined by the Superintendent due to the availability of surplus HCPSS funds. The County Council voted down amendments adding additional funds to support HCPSS based at least partly on the County Executive's letter and demonstrated commitment to funding HCPSS. At the May 27 Board of Education budget work session, Superintendent Barnes described how use of the fund balances proposed by the County Executive were not available to cover current services in the FY26 operating budget. Importantly, this account of fund balances was more in line with estimates provided by Board of Education staff at the County Council's last work session of May 16.

Cutting over 100 HCPSS teachers and staff due to the \$9M gap in fund balance "differences in opinion" is unacceptable. Either the money was, is, and always has been available or it was never enough to begin with. Why is the County Executive saying one thing and the Board of Education another? Why are two different sets of numbers being used to discuss the same budget?

Lack of transparency into the budgeting process has left parents, teachers, and staff feeling burned by a system that gaslights us into believing we have enough money to preserve class sizes and jobs while the very next day there is discussion about the elimination of whole programs. The public deserves clear, authoritative financial information on which to base informed judgments about the trajectory of the educational system we are collectively responsible for. This situation with different public officials making different conclusions about the same fund balance has to end.

Every member of county leadership who claims to support funding the schools to their current levels of service must work to avoid further damaging the public school system, which saw class sizes increases and staff reductions during last year's budget debates. This is just deja vu that we fear will be repeated next year. We think there are immediate needs that have to be addressed and systemic changes that must occur:

1. Howard County leaders, BOE, and HCPSS should hold a town hall solely around education whereby each can finally agree on one set of numbers. We have to begin that open conversation Council Member Rigby called for shortly after the budget passed, sooner rather than later. We expect Howard County to respond with a plan and not with charts and graphics that don't tell the whole story.

2. The Board of Education should assume more risk in any fund balances. This was an option given to the BOE on May 27th, and they should take it. To a great extent, it doesn't matter if the fund balances are lower than the County Executive wrote. Parents, teachers, and staff cannot have two years of continuing staffing reductions and expect that the system is not at a tipping point, and close to falling off a cliff. HCPSS' reputation for educational excellence is literally on the line. Unless sufficient funds are

committed to HCPSS now and in the future, newly graduated teachers will not want to work for a system continually looking to cut the most recently hired staff. Howard County itself takes the large tax base of parents for granted, and it should not anymore.

3. In the interests of transparency, the Board of Education should hold a new public hearing on its budget. The budget is not the same one the public testified to earlier this year. Stakeholders deserve a voice.

4. County Executive Ball has said repeatedly in multiple memos to the BOE: "I also want to reiterate my strong commitment to ensure that the health benefit expenses of the school system are met and that the HCPSS Health Fund remains solvent." We appreciate Dr. Ball's commitment to the health of HCPSS employees but also strongly suggest this be put in a legally-binding memorandum of understanding (MOU). We believe doing this guarantees responsible fiscal practices of both Howard County government and HCPSS. This creates a level of certainty the BOE should use to draw down on the fund balance and act in the best interests of over 57,500 students at HCPSS.

Thank you,  
Molly Fieldsend  
Howard County homeowner and parent of 3 HCPSS students

[howardcountymd.gov](http://howardcountymd.gov)



Ref:MSG6234588

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**From:** Nora Flack  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 1:05 PM  
**To:** cball@howardcountymd.gov; boe@hcpss.org; board@hcpss.org; councilmail@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Save 3rd grade strings and GT

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for 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.]

My name is Nora Flack and I am the proud parent of two orchestra students at Dayton Oaks Elementary School and Folly Quarter Middle School. I have included their letters as well.

“My name is Isla Flack, I’m in 4th grade and play the viola. 3rd grade orchestra helps me out a lot. I get a chance to learn and improve my musical skills. When I leave my class to go to orchestra, it gives me a little break to have fun but learn at the same time. I love our orchestra teacher Ms. Sutton. She makes learning so fun and teaches me new songs. I want new 3rd graders to be able to have that love for orchestra too! Thank you.”

“My name is Sebastian Flack, I’m in 6th grade and play the violin. If you start orchestra in 3rd grade, you’re bound to have more success in it. The idea is simple. 3rd grade is mainly your introduction to orchestra. It’s the time to learn songs and learn the basics of playing a string instrument. 4th grade is your time to improve your technique. 5th grade is the opportunity to audition for GT Orchestra or a special program. If we cut 3rd grade from the orchestra program, you’ll essentially be removing the year of actually learning the basics about orchestra. Then you’ll be left with 4th grade to learn the basics and 5th to improve. This decreases your chance to get into a special orchestra program. Not to mention all the wonderful teachers and assistants and opportunities for students that could be terminated. Basically, you’re having a big effect on the way kids learn string instruments. Please continue to support the music program for all students. Thank you.”

Like my kids I also had the opportunity to start strings in 3rd grade. The introduction to fine arts and music education had such a profound impact on me that I continued playing through high school. The collaborative nature of musical ensembles teaches the value of teamwork, discipline, and perseverance. Cutting programs such as 3rd grade orchestra disproportionately hurts children from lower income homes. Often children from lower incomes only get exposed to the arts through their schools. I was that child and that’s why I am so passionate about this topic. As a parent volunteer I am able to witness the extreme joy and excitement of many students. Although the cut will not directly impact my own kids, I am advocating for the future 3rd grade string students.

At Dayton Oaks alone, **87 out of 123 third grade students—over 70%—participate in the strings program**, demonstrating its strong reach and popularity. Cutting this program would undermine years of growth, passion, and opportunity for young musicians.

I am also advocating for our GT teachers. At Dayton Oaks: Over **40%** of students participate in **Instructional Seminars** which allow students to apply advanced skills like research, communication, and technology use. Over **35%** of students in grades 3–5 are in **Curriculum**

**Extension Units (CEUs)**, with grades 4–5 receiving two CEU sessions. In grades 4–5, **GT Math** reaches **42% of students**, providing instruction 1–2 years above grade level.

I implore you to look at any and all options available to keep the programs and the staff that enrich our students and our community. Thank you for your time.

--

Nora Sayasithsena Flack, BA, RDH  
(202) 207-6299

---

**From:** Shayna Siegel Glicksman  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 3, 2025 8:22 PM  
**To:** cball@howardcountymd.gov; yahmad@howardcountymd.gov; councilmail@howardcountymd.gov; boe@hcpss.org; pathompson@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Education must have transparency and be funded

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for 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 Elected Officials,

In a May 20 letter County Executive Ball assured the Board of Education his adjusted allocation of money for HCPSS would be sufficient to cover a same services level budget outlined by the Superintendent due to the availability of surplus HCPSS funds. The County Council voted down amendments adding additional funds to support HCPSS based at least partly on the County Executive's letter and demonstrated commitment to funding HCPSS. At the May 27 Board of Education budget work session, Superintendent Barnes described how use of the fund balances proposed by the County Executive were not available to cover current services in the FY26 operating budget. Importantly, this account of fund balances was more in line with estimates provided by Board of Education staff at the County Council's last work session of May 16.

Cutting over 100 HCPSS teachers and staff due to the \$9M gap in fund balance "differences in opinion" is unacceptable. Either the money was, is, and always has been available or it was never enough to begin with. Why is the County Executive saying one thing and the Board of Education another? Why are two different sets of numbers being used to discuss the same budget?

Lack of transparency into the budgeting process has left parents, teachers, and staff feeling burned by a system that gaslights us into believing we have enough money to preserve class sizes and jobs while the very next day there is discussion about the elimination of whole programs. The public deserves clear, authoritative financial information on which to base informed judgments about the trajectory of the educational system we are collectively responsible for. This situation with different public officials making different conclusions about the same fund balance has to end.

Every member of county leadership who claims to support funding the schools to their current levels of service must work to avoid further damaging the public school system, which saw class sizes increases and staff reductions during last year's budget debates. This is just deja vu that we fear will be repeated next year. We think there are immediate needs that have to be addressed and systemic changes that must occur:

1. Howard County leaders, BOE, and HCPSS should hold a town hall solely around education whereby each can finally agree on one set of numbers. We have to begin that open conversation Council Member Rigby called for shortly after the budget passed, sooner rather than later. We expect Howard County to respond with a plan and not with charts and graphics that don't tell the whole story.

2. The Board of Education should assume more risk in any fund balances. This was an option given to the BOE on May 27th, and they should take it. To a great extent, it doesn't matter if the fund balances are lower than the County Executive wrote. Parents, teachers, and staff cannot have two years of continuing staffing reductions and expect that the system is not at a tipping point, and close to falling off a cliff. HCPSS' reputation for educational excellence is literally on the line. Unless sufficient funds are committed to HCPSS now and in the future, newly graduated teachers will not want to work for a system continually looking to cut the most

recently hired staff. Howard County itself takes the large tax base of parents for granted, and it should not anymore.

3. In the interests of transparency, the Board of Education should hold a new public hearing on its budget. The budget is not the same one the public testified to earlier this year. Stakeholders deserve a voice.

4. County Executive Ball has said repeatedly in multiple memos to the BOE: "I also want to reiterate my strong commitment to ensure that the health benefit expenses of the school system are met and that the HCPSS Health Fund remains solvent." We appreciate Dr. Ball's commitment to the health of HCPSS employees but also strongly suggest this be put in a legally-binding memorandum of understanding (MOU). We believe doing this guarantees responsible fiscal practices of both Howard County government and HCPSS. This creates a level of certainty the BOE should use to draw down on the fund balance and act in the best interests of over 57,500 students at HCPSS.

Thank you,

Shayna Glicksman

Howard County homeowner, parent of two HCPSS students, and HCPSS employee

--

To the world we dream about! And the one we live in now... Anais Mitchell - *Hadestown*

---

**From:** Solmaz Spence  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 4:37 PM  
**To:** cball@howardcountymd.gov; councilmail@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Please Increase Funding to Protect HCPSS Students & Teachers

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

Dear County Council Members and County Executive Ball,

I'm writing as a concerned parent and community member to urge you to increase funding for the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) in the FY26 budget.

Right now, our schools face a shortfall of over \$9 million, and proposed cuts will devastate elementary education in particular. These include:

Elimination of 42 elementary media paraeducators

Reduction of 39 elementary Gifted & Talented educators

Cutting 12 positions from the 3rd grade strings program

Elimination of nearly 17 additional elementary teaching positions

These educators and programs are critical to student growth, enrichment, and success. Cutting them will hurt our children — academically, emotionally, and creatively.

Please act now to fully fund HCPSS and protect our students, teachers, and schools.

Sincerely,

Solmaz Spence

(Parent of a Phelps Luck Elementary School kindergartener and third grader).