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**From:** Corinne Happel <corinne.happel@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 27, 2025 11:18 PM  
**To:** Budget Testimony; budgetfeedback@hcpss.org; CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Please do not cut elementary GT teachers in Howard County public schools

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

Dear County Council,

I am writing to strongly advocate against cuts to elementary GT teachers. Please fund the HCPSS operating budget so that these cuts will not happen.

As a pediatrician, I believe all children are gifted. I think renaming gifted and talented (GT) programs in the state to "accelerated opportunities" or some other more neutral term would go a long way to improving the unnecessarily polarized discourse around supporting the needs of accelerated learners. Unfortunately, as it stands, I frequently hear derisive comments made toward GT offerings, particularly at the elementary school level. These comments occur in public discourse, even in places where we would expect mutual respect toward all types of learners.

From my work with children and from discussions with parents around the county, children whose educational needs are not met become disengaged and disruptive. Last year, I saw this in my own 4th grader who became very disengaged in his English Language Arts class that is taught with children who have not yet mastered on-grade level reading when he was reading chapter books like Charlotte's Web in kindergarten. This disengagement pulled the teacher's attention from other students as she reached out to me because of her concerns. Unfortunately, this disengagement has continued into the fifth grade where GT math, GT Curriculum extension units, and GT seminars are the bright spots in his year. This disengagement has been so severe that my principal personally called me this month to check in when she saw that my child's behavior was changing. GT teachers at the elementary school level provide some of the only opportunities that accelerated learners have to engage with material at their level. When discussing my child with his GT math teacher, his level of engagement and respect in class is superb. When children are appropriately challenged, their engagement thrives.

Similarly, a parent of a 3rd grader confided to me that her son is frequently sent to the principal's office because he is disruptive in ELA, a class he feels like does not teach him new material. These children are not alone -- I hear similar stories from children and parents around the county.. **Third, fourth, and fifth grade students have few opportunities to engage academically at an advanced level with the exception of their experiences with their GT teachers. Please fund them.**

Having GT teachers in elementary school is positive for all children because it:

- 1) Increases the number of total teachers available to children in elementary school. Children who are not pulled out for GT opportunities, have an increased teacher to student ratio in their classes.
- 2) Prevents disengagement and disruptions. When children are taught at their level, their minds are engaged and they naturally diminish disruptive behaviors.

**3) Promotes the social emotional development for children who are accelerated learners. Children feel disrespected and feel like their time is wasted when they are required to attend school but are forced to listen to material that is too basic for their level of understanding.**

Thanks in advance for your care for all children.

With gratitude,  
Corinne Happel, MD

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**From:** Jhonna Seifert <jhonna27@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 10:19 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Budget Testimony  
**Subject:** Fully funds HCPSS budget please

**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 Council,

I am writing to advocate strongly against cuts to elementary GT teachers. Please fund the HCPSS operating budget so that these cuts will not happen.

Having GT teachers in elementary school is positive for all children because it:

- 1) Increases the number of total teachers available to children in elementary school. Children who are not pulled out for GT opportunities, have an increased teacher to student ratio in their classes. Learners of all abilities get more individualized attention and are appropriately challenged.
- 2) Prevents disengagement and disruptions. When children are taught at their level, their minds are engaged and they naturally diminish disruptive behaviors.
- 3) Promotes social and emotional development for children who are accelerated learners. Children feel disrespected and disengaged when they are required to attend school but are forced to listen to material that is too basic for their level of understanding.

Thanks in advance for your care for all children.

With gratitude,  
Jhonna Seifert

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**From:** Kathy Lane <Kathy\_Lane@hcpss.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 9:21 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Budget for 25-26 School Year

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

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

Hello,

I am writing to you to ask that you fully fund the HCPSS budget for 25-26 school year. I am writing to you as a 30 year veteran teacher in Howard County. It has always been a pleasure and honor to teach in Howard County. However, the significant changes in curriculum and staffing the past 5 years or so are very concerning to me.

I understand the importance of a balanced budget, but it seems as if the cuts being made are a detriment to our teachers and staff. Our GT program, along with our music programs need to be fully funded.

The GT program in Howard County, it is one of the many things that made us great. Our gifted students deserve to be taught at their level, with their peers. In addition to the many wonderful benefits of the gt program for our students, there are many advantages for all students.

-When we teach our math classes, this allows for smaller classes in on grade level and below grade level classes. In doing so, teachers are able to provide more direct, individualized instruction to the most vulnerable of students by reducing the number of students in the classes.

-We are able to go into all K-2 classes and teach talent development lessons. These lessons give us a chance to interact with all students. GT teachers are able to work alongside homeroom teachers to identify potentially gifted students who may not be reading at the top of their class, but they are incredible thinkers. We also work with these teachers to model how to implement advanced level thinking lessons.

-Our seminars are open to all students. These seminars give students the opportunity to explore passions that may not be related to math, science or social studies.

I would invite any of you to spend a full day in any school before cutting programs or increasing class size. Talk to all staff, from custodians, paras, teachers and administration. It seems as if budgets are increasing, yet by the time you get to the school level it feels as if we are doing more with less. I am sure there is waste within the school system, but please just walk a day in our shoes before making any cuts that directly affect our students and staff.

Gifted and Talented Resource Teacher  
Veterans Elementary School  
410-313-1700

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**From:** Laura Henry <laurahenry@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 9:22 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Cc:** dave gibson  
**Subject:** Request for County Council to add funding to HCPSS Operating Budget

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

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

Dear Howard County Council,

As you are likely aware, the HCPSS Board of Education (BOE) and Superintendent Joint Letter sent last week communicated that County Executive Ball did not fully fund the HCPSS Operating Budget. In fact, **his budget is more than \$70 million short of what the BOE requested, which will lead to program cuts, teacher and staff cuts, and possibly class size increases, all of which are harmful to our children and our community.** Particularly at risk are music programs and elementary GT teachers, as these were slated to be cut last year and the community rallied against those cuts. Class sizes already increased last year for middle school and high school students.

**County Council, please add money back to and fully fund the HCPSS Operating Budget.**

HCPSS matters because many families including my own live in Howard County **because of the highly rated school system.** In fact, my husband and I grew up in Howard County and graduated from Glenelg High School, and participated in the world-renowned Glenelg Band and GT programs. We moved back to the area so that **our children (currently first and third graders at Bushy Park Elementary School) will benefit from the same enriching programs.**

**Having programs such as music and elementary GT teach our next generations commitment, dedication, and tenacity at a young age,** which they will bring into their adult lives and careers. My third grader is thriving in her strings class this year, loves her strings teacher (Mrs. Cherry), and is so excited for her first orchestra performance on April 29th, where she will perform for her entire family (parents, siblings, grandparents). She also loves and looks forward to acquiring new knowledge in her GT seminars, such as environmental social studies where she learned about recycling, and encourages the entire family to use less plastic now. We even picked up trash along the side of the road on Saturday together, to help our only planet get more clean! Without these incredible music and GT programs, my younger daughter will not be able to have the same positive experiences and tremendous growth as her sister, and my older daughter will know what she is missing out on should these programs be cut.

**Thank you for prioritizing HCPSS students and teachers in the county budget, and fully funding the HCPSS Operating Budget.**

Kind Regards,

Laura Gibson

Proud Howard County Resident (30+ years)

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**From:** Stefanie Fogle <kanamidori@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 29, 2025 4:35 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Budget Testimony  
**Subject:** School Budget Cuts

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

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

Dear County Council,

Please do not make cuts to the GT program at the elementary level. Our students deserve to have access to these programs. We are the wealthiest county in Maryland. We should be able to afford this.

My child is thriving because he has access to a curriculum that challenges him. Please don't take these vital resources away. We have one of the best school districts in the country because we offer these advanced learning opportunities to our students.

Having GT teachers in elementary school is positive for all children because it:

- 1) Increases the number of total teachers available to children in elementary school. Children who are not pulled out for GT opportunities, have an increased teacher to student ratio in their classes. Learners of all abilities get more individualized attention and are appropriately challenged.
- 2) Prevents disengagement and disruptions. When children are taught at their level, their minds are engaged and they naturally diminish disruptive behaviors.
- 3) Promotes social and emotional development for children who are accelerated learners. Children feel disrespected and disengaged when they are required to attend school but are forced to listen to material that is too basic for their level of understanding.

Thanks in advance for your care for all children.

With gratitude,

Stefanie Fogle  
Mom to a 3rd grader at Manor Woods Elementary School



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**From:** Torie Grant <toriegrant@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 29, 2025 1:27 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Budget Testimony  
**Subject:** Prioritize Our Schools — Restore Full Funding to HCPSS

[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 Leadership Team,

I am writing as a concerned parent and resident to **strongly advocate for full funding for the FY26 HCPSS Operating Budget.** HCPSS continues to get a smaller slice of the county budget pie and suffered cuts last year that resulted in teacher losses and increased class sizes. These cuts are harmful to the children of Howard County. The school system should not be leading the way in cuts. Education is a core public value and service that we are asking you, our elected officials, to prioritize in the county budget!

As the percentage of the county budget allocated to HCPSS has decreased, the number of students who qualify for special education services, the number of students for whom English is a second language, and the number of students who receive free and reduced meals *have all increased!* HCPSS needs additional resources to support these educationally vulnerable students. If anything, HCPSS should be getting MORE of the county budget, not less.

The students of HCPSS are the future of our county and our nation and an investment in them will pay back in dividends for generations to come. Many families, including my own, moved to Howard County for our excellent public schools. Continued cuts to the school system budget will risk losing families who make our community stronger, both culturally and economically.

As a board-certified pediatrician and mother of young children, I continue to be very concerned about the discussion surrounding cuts at the elementary level, which last year included proposed cuts to elementary GT and orchestra teachers. Early exposure to STEM and music are critical to fostering a lifelong love of learning, science, and music. It is important to keep our accelerated students engaged and to cultivate their full potential. Last year the community rallied in front of the George Howard Building and the Board of Education to stop GT and orchestra teacher cuts. **Elementary GT and orchestra teachers are extremely important to families in Howard County.** *Please secure funding to stop potential elementary GT teacher and orchestra cuts!*

Cutting GT teachers has multiple negative effects on students and teachers, including extra work for the teachers who remain and larger class sizes in 4th and 5th grade math and 3th-5th grade science and social studies, hurting students of ALL learning abilities. Cutting GT teachers means less individualized instruction for each student. Many students are still suffering the long-term negative educational effects of prolonged remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic and are academically behind in math. Now is a particularly terrible time for education and teacher cuts which would increase elementary math class sizes.

Additionally, elementary GT and orchestra programs provide exposure and access to early STEM and music education that thousands of HCPSS students would be unable to access outside of school, due to cost and transportation needs. Cutting GT teachers means fewer students will have the opportunity to be involved in GT programs, have their minds challenged, and learn to think in different ways. This would be a great loss for our schools and our community. My oldest daughter has excelled in GT math, CEUs, and seminars and orchestra. I want the same excellent experience for my younger children and for all children in Howard County.

**Please restore full funding to the HCPSS FY26 Operating Budget to prevent teacher cuts and program losses. The children of Howard County are counting on you.**

Respectfully,

Torie Grant  
HCPSS Parent, Community Member, and Pediatrician

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**From:** Jenna Hammer <jennasunday@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 30, 2025 8:15 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Budget Testimony  
**Subject:** Budget concerns

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

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

Dear County Council,

I am writing to advocate strongly against cuts to elementary GT teachers. Please fund the HCPSS operating budget so that these cuts will not happen.

Having GT teachers in elementary school is positive for all children because it:

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- 3) Promotes social and emotional development for children who are accelerated learners. Children feel disrespected and disengaged when they are required to attend school but are forced to listen to material that is too basic for their level of understanding.

Thanks in advance for your care for all children.

With gratitude,

Jenna Hammer

Mother of 1 current HCPSS student (Bushy Park) and 2 more future students

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**From:** Rimmy Grewal <rimmyg@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 30, 2025 2:51 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Budget Testimony  
**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 Council,

I am writing to advocate strongly against cuts to elementary GT teachers. Please fund the HCPSS operating budget so that these cuts will not happen.

Having GT teachers in elementary school is positive for all children because it:

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- 3) Promotes social and emotional development for children who are accelerated learners. Children feel disrespected and disengaged when they are required to attend school but are forced to listen to material that is too basic for their level of understanding.

I have 2 children in HCPSS and we moved to this county due to the excellent curriculum and opportunities for children to excel. If funding is not received it will be a huge detriment for the school system.

Thanks in advance for your care for all children.

With gratitude,  
Renmeet Grewal

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**From:** Torie Grant <toriegrant@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 30, 2025 12:41 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Budget Testimony  
**Subject:** Re: Prioritize Our Schools — Restore Full Funding to HCPSS

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

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

Dear Howard County Council and Leadership Team,

Hello again. Just a quick follow up to my email yesterday to share that there were 56 third graders who played string instruments at the Bushy Park spring concert last night. It was incredible to see their progress, hard work, and dedication. Third grade strings is very important to families in Howard County. **Please restore funds to the HCPSS Operating Budget to prevent cuts from these wonderful programs.**

Thank you,  
Torie Grant

On Tue, Apr 29, 2025 at 1:26 PM Torie Grant <[toriegrant@gmail.com](mailto:toriegrant@gmail.com)> wrote:  
Dear Howard County Council and Leadership Team,

I am writing as a concerned parent and resident to **strongly advocate for full funding for the FY26 HCPSS Operating Budget.** HCPSS continues to get a smaller slice of the county budget pie and suffered cuts last year that resulted in teacher losses and increased class sizes. These cuts are harmful to the children of Howard County. The school system should not be leading the way in cuts. Education is a core public value and service that we are asking you, our elected officials, to prioritize in the county budget!

As the percentage of the county budget allocated to HCPSS has decreased, the number of students who qualify for special education services, the number of students for whom English is a second language, and the number of students who receive free and reduced meals *have all increased!* HCPSS needs additional resources to support these educationally vulnerable students. If anything, HCPSS should be getting MORE of the county budget, not less.

The students of HCPSS are the future of our county and our nation and an investment in them will pay back in dividends for generations to come. Many families, including my own, moved to Howard County for our excellent public schools. Continued cuts to the school system budget will risk losing families who make our community stronger, both culturally and economically.

As a board-certified pediatrician and mother of young children, I continue to be very concerned about the discussion surrounding cuts at the elementary level, which last year included proposed cuts to

elementary GT and orchestra teachers. Early exposure to STEM and music are critical to fostering a lifelong love of learning, science, and music. It is important to keep our accelerated students engaged and to cultivate their full potential. Last year the community rallied in front of the George Howard Building and the Board of Education to stop GT and orchestra teacher cuts. **Elementary GT and orchestra teachers are extremely important to families in Howard County.** Please secure funding to stop potential elementary GT teacher and orchestra cuts!

Cutting GT teachers has multiple negative effects on students and teachers, including extra work for the teachers who remain and larger class sizes in 4th and 5th grade math and 3th-5th grade science and social studies, hurting students of ALL learning abilities. Cutting GT teachers means less individualized instruction for each student. Many students are still suffering the long-term negative educational effects of prolonged remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic and are academically behind in math. Now is a particularly terrible time for education and teacher cuts which would increase elementary math class sizes.

Additionally, elementary GT and orchestra programs provide exposure and access to early STEM and music education that thousands of HCPSS students would be unable to access outside of school, due to cost and transportation needs. Cutting GT teachers means fewer students will have the opportunity to be involved in GT programs, have their minds challenged, and learn to think in different ways. This would be a great loss for our schools and our community. My oldest daughter has excelled in GT math, CEUs, and seminars and orchestra. I want the same excellent experience for my younger children and for all children in Howard County.

**Please restore full funding to the HCPSS FY26 Operating Budget to prevent teacher cuts and program losses. The children of Howard County are counting on you.**

Respectfully,

Torie Grant  
HCPSS Parent, Community Member, and Pediatrician

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**From:** Candice Gerstner <candicegerstner@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 1, 2025 7:52 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** HCPSS Operating Budget

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

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

Dear County Council,

As a parent of three HCPSS students, I kindly ask that you add funds to fully fund the HCPSS Operating Budget. HCPSS is so important not only to my family, but also the community. In particular, the programs that are at risk of getting cut that are very important to the community are the GT classes (and the GT resource teachers in general) and orchestra. Both of these programs have been instrumental in the development of my children and I couldn't be more grateful to be in a county that offers our kids these opportunities to grow beyond the standard curriculum. Most of the facts and lessons learned that my kids come home to tell me about come from the fantastic GT teachers at our school. These are facts that spark wonderful conversation at home and allow for everyone to learn together.

Thank you for your time and I hope that this information is helpful to you.

Sincerely,  
Candice Gerstner

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**From:** Cristin Kline <cristinkline@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 1, 2025 6:22 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** HCPSS Operating Budget

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

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

Good evening,

I am writing on behalf of myself, my husband, and our entire Bushy Park community to express my disappoint and extreme disagreement in the possible cuts to elementary GT and orchestra teachers in Howard County Public Schools and specifically Bushy Park Elementary School. I hope this is very strongly reevaluated and the HCPSS Operating Budget is fully funded as it should be! The reason we move this area was for the schools! We move across the county line from Montgomery County in 2021 so our oldest daughter could start Kindergarten in one of the absolute best school districts available to us. We moved so we could provide our children with the best education system, that was our choice. We moved our family for HCPSS and all it has to offer our children, and these cuts are completely insane. We are paying the taxes, and we moved here for a reason! Not to have these funds cut!

My third grader was in strings for the first time this year and had the most wonderful experience from start to finish. She learned to play the violin and is so proud of all she has learned this year. We just went to the Strings Concert on Tuesday evening 4/29/25 at Bushy Park, and it was so wonderful to see SO MANY Bushy Park students up there playing, participating, and learning together. Mrs. Cherry is an amazing orchestra and band teacher, and she is just outstanding in all aspects of her work with the students and parents. My first grader already knows what she wants to play when she gets into third grade, and I hope that she will be able to have the same amazing experience.

As for the possibly of losing a GT teachers. I can't believe this is even a topic of conversation. That would be larger math class sizes in 4th and 5th grade, larger science and social studies class sizes in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade, the loss of GT seminars, and fewer lessons with the GT teacher for all students in K, 1st, and 2nd grade. This is a program that helps students excel and continue to thrive in areas they should be and areas that they are showing promise in, in areas they need to continue to be challenged in. GT programs are what set children apart and allow them to shine. This should be a TOP priority not something possibly to be cut. My third grader already has 28 kids in her homeroom class... 28! And to think that there is a possibility of losing GT teachers and making that number even higher is completely unacceptable. My kids aren't even in GT so this is not coming from a mom who does not want her own child's GT class to go away. This is coming from a mom that wants her children to strive to one day be in a GT class. This is an opportunity for the children who are in GT to continue to thrive and for others to work up to. But instead, you want to cut it or cut funding or cut teachers that will make all classes bigger and therefore all the kids will be negatively impacted?? It literally makes no sense. And this go against every reason we chose to be in HCPSS.



We have already started discussing having to move to a private school depending on this all goes. It is so frustrating, and completely against everything our county and our state have worked for. This exactly how we will go from one of the best school systems to not even on the radar! I hope these changes are reevaluated asap and I hope you fully fund HCPSS Operating Budget as it should be!

Thank you,  
Cristin Kline

301.518.4095  
[Cristinkline@outlook.com](mailto:Cristinkline@outlook.com)

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**From:** Leena Moiz <leenamoiz@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 1, 2025 6:41 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Budget Testimony  
**Subject:** GT 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,

I am writing to advocate strongly against cuts to elementary GT teachers. Please fund the HCPSS operating budget so that these cuts will not happen.

Having GT teachers in elementary school is positive for all children because it:

- 1) Increases the number of total teachers available to children in elementary school. Children who are not pulled out for GT opportunities, have an increased teacher to student ratio in their classes. Learners of all abilities get more individualized attention and are appropriately challenged.
- 2) Prevents disengagement and disruptions. When children are taught at their level, their minds are engaged and they naturally diminish disruptive behaviors.
- 3) Promotes social and emotional development for children who are accelerated learners. Children feel disrespected and disengaged when they are required to attend school but are forced to listen to material that is too basic for their level of understanding.

Thanks in advance for your care for all children.

With gratitude,  
Leena Moiz

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**From:** Meeta Patel <mp0681@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 2, 2025 7:45 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** GT funding

**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.]

When I advocated for finding at the state level, the response below agreed with keeping GT funded (highlighted). I'm not sure why there is a huge disconnect. There are frivolous other things we are spending money on but our children's education should be on the forefront. You can be sure your wealthiest constituents will leave the county if our children are not put first. Howard county is known for our education and our demanding curriculum, please keep it that way.

Thanks,  
Meeta

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **StateBoard MSDE -MSDE-** <[stateboard.msde@maryland.gov](mailto:stateboard.msde@maryland.gov)>  
Date: Mon, Mar 24, 2025, 12:32 PM  
Subject: Re: Math policy proposal  
To: Meeta Patel <[mp0681@gmail.com](mailto:mp0681@gmail.com)>, Joshua Michael -MSDE- <[joshua.michael1@maryland.gov](mailto:joshua.michael1@maryland.gov)>

Hello,

Thank you for reaching out to the Maryland State Board of Education to share your thoughts regarding our state's proposed math policy. We truly appreciate your engagement and dedication to the success of our students. [Here](#) is the most up-to-date version of the policy, for your convenience.

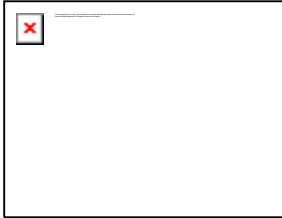
Core to this policy is the expansion of opportunities for accelerated math coursework for students in any grade. This policy prioritizes equitable access to acceleration opportunities, particularly for students who have been historically excluded, with structures in place to support their success. Therefore, we want to clarify that the math policy is not ending gifted and talented programming. On the contrary, the intent of this policy is to support and enhance more opportunities for acceleration in math for students from all backgrounds and in all districts across the state, including those who are already identified for and participating in gifted and talented programming.

To be clear, gifted and talented programs remain an important part of our educational framework, and the policy encourages the development of strategies that will support acceleration in a way that is both effective and equitable for all students. Note that additional revisions to the policy in the latest draft bring further clarity to this component of the instructional program. Our goal is to continue providing advanced learning opportunities while ensuring that all students have the tools and resources they need to succeed.

We appreciate your ongoing advocacy for our students and encourage you to continue sharing your thoughts as we move forward with these important initiatives. If you have any further questions or would like more information, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Joshua Michael



**Maryland State Board of Education**

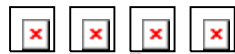
O: (410) 767-0467

[stateboard.msde@maryland.gov](mailto:stateboard.msde@maryland.gov)

[200 W. Baltimore Street](#)

[Baltimore, Maryland 21201](#)

[marylandpublicschools.org](http://marylandpublicschools.org)



On Sun, Mar 23, 2025 at 9:29 PM Meeta Patel <[mp0681@gmail.com](mailto:mp0681@gmail.com)> wrote:

It seems the math proposal that is going to be voted on 3/25 has been flying under the radar. I speak for many Howard county parents when I say removing advanced/GT math next year for grades 3-5 would be detrimental to many advanced students. My son is in fourth grade GT math and he would be bored out of his mind, along with the rest of the two GT math classes, if he has to go back to grade level math. Bored students mean they would not learn, be disruptive potentially because they have nothing better to do, and not reach their full potential. If I understand correctly, advanced and GT could be implemented the following year. How would that work when all the advanced kids were punished for a year and did not learn anything new in math? I strongly believe this should be revised. Yes you can focus on the underperforming kids, but don't punish the advanced kids by doing so.

Thanks,  
Meeta

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**From:** Sherri Schmitt <sherrischmitt1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 3, 2025 4:46 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** FULLY FUND HCPSS

**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.]

The elementary GT program serves as a fundamental tool in bridging the achievement gap within our underprivileged communities. By investing in and preserving the GT program at the elementary level, we not only provide crucial opportunities for academic advancement and enrichment to students who need it most but also actively work towards leveling the playing field for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances. Cutting this program would only deepen the divide and further hinder the progress towards achieving equitable education for all. Therefore, I implore you to prioritize the needs of our underprivileged communities and maintain support for the elementary GT program.

Quote from an underprivileged fifth grade student after finding out about potential cuts, "My parents can't afford extra activities and they really can't afford learning summer camps. The only time I get to learn about something new and interesting is during Instructional Seminars."

I'm a Gifted and Talented teacher at a Title I school, and I see firsthand how much this program means to my students. Many of them beg me not to send them back to their regular classrooms—not because they don't like their teachers, but because they struggle to focus due to constant disruptions, and they often feel the material is far too easy for them.

One moment that really stuck with me was when a student said, "It's like the government is trying to make smart kids dumb." What I believe she meant is that she doesn't get to choose where she goes to school, and the gifted program is her only chance to learn at the level she's capable of.

I urge you to truly consider the impact these programs have. Cutting funding now means taking away critical opportunities from HCPSS students who need them most.

---

**From:** j buckley <jbuckley4421@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 6, 2025 5:35 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Budget Cuts

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

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

Hello,

My name is Jerry Buckley. I am reaching out regarding the proposed budget cuts affecting Howard County. It is with great concern that this could impact the much needed Gifted and Talented programs. These programs give a multitude of opportunities to all students such as a daily student-run television production, countless seminars such as Debate, Photography, and STEM. Along with interscholastic competitions such as National History Day and various other programs, hundreds of community members recently celebrated the value of ALL the mentioned programs at the Enrichment Fair where students proudly performed and presented their work. The G&T programs can foster academic achievement, socialization, and future success. Kara Nanni, an experienced G&T teacher in the Howard County School system at Bonnie Branch Middle School, incorporates enrichment activities that delve deep into the curriculum. Her passion and commitment are what drives the success of these programs. Professionals such as Mrs. Nanni are beyond valuable to these programs, in turn helping to develop successful students that have unlimited potential.

In closing, I hope you realize how valuable and necessary G&T programs are to both students and teachers. Building a strong community starts with programs such as these.

Sincerely,

Jerry Buckley

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**From:** mary strassner <marystrassner@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 6, 2025 3:12 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Re: GT funding

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

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

I forgot to give name and address, sorry  
Mary Strassner  
4918 Evening Sky Ct 21043

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad](#)

On Tuesday, May 6, 2025, 2:39 PM, mary strassner <marystrassner@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Council Members,

Thank you for your service to our county. I know you have tough decisions to make, as we all do when it comes to our budget.

People, including me, move to Howard County because of their stellar education system. Each year something else has been chiseled away from the GT program. GT students get very little funding compared to other groups, yet they have the most to offer as far as future tax dollars and contributing members of society. These students can be bored and drop out of school if not challenged. My children have benefited from these programs and were challenged more than they would have been in regular programs. Opportunities such as debate, STEM, interscholastic competitions, History Day, producing and directing daily news shows, research, writer's guild, forensics, and many more programs prepare them to compete and get into colleges.

If we are paying more taxes than 22 other counties, we should expect a school system that matches it.

Please don't cut GT funding.

Thank you.

*Mary*

---

**From:** Sherry S. <sherry.smalls@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 5, 2025 8:49 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Restore Full HCPSS Funding for 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,

I'm writing as a concerned parent to urge you to fully fund the Howard County Public School System for the operating budget FY26.

HCPSS has faces years of underfunded. This year the System needs atleast \$80.6 million just to maintain current services.

It's unacceptable that our schools are the first to face cuts when budgets tighten.

We bought as house here 13 years ago because of the education system and would like to stay and enjoy the public school but it may unfortunately not be the best place for my GT students.

I am requesting minimum of \$29.2million to be restored back to the budget.

Please prioritize students and funding to HCPSS.

Thank you

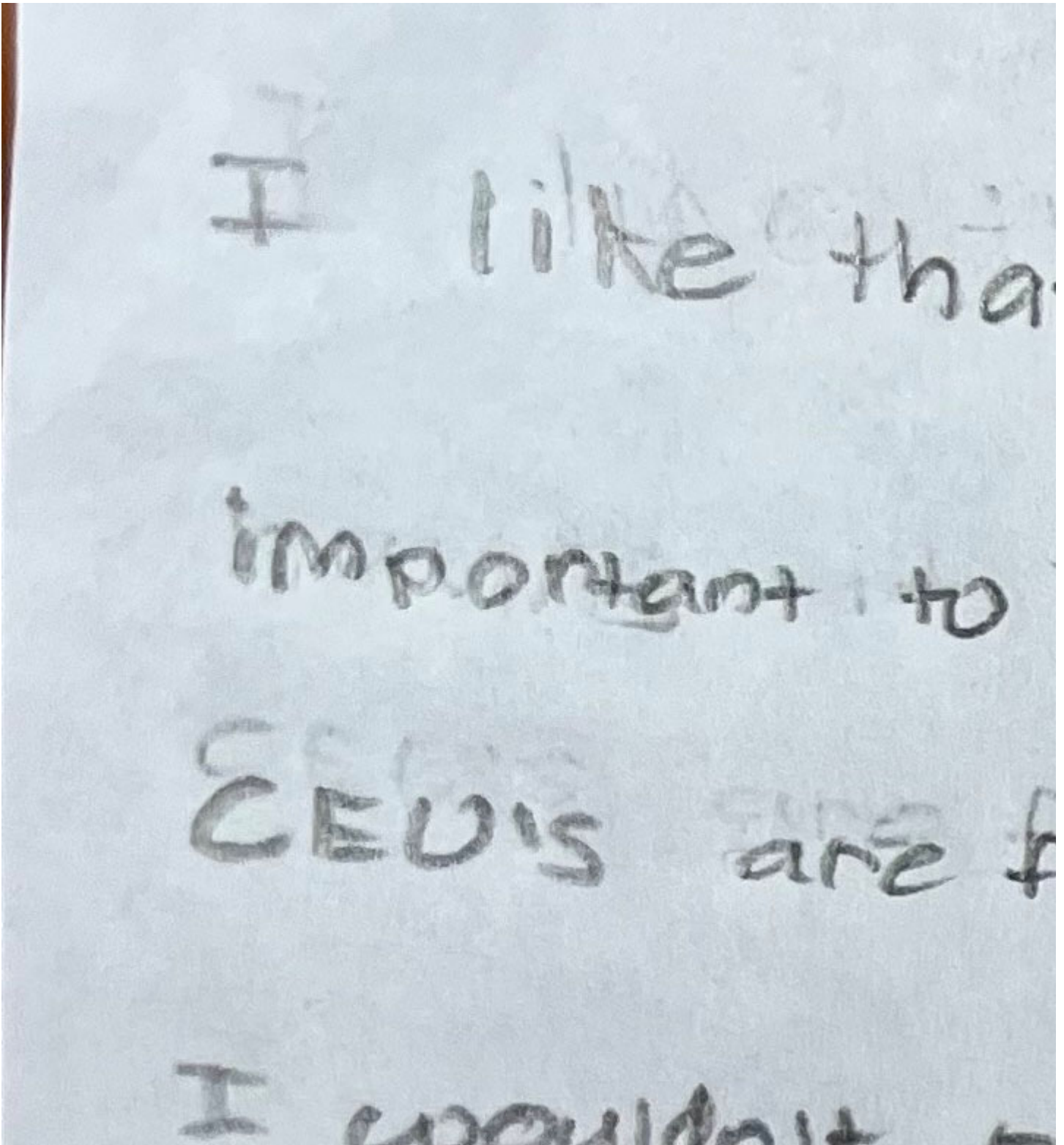
Sherry Smalls  
Elkridge,MD

Sherry C. Smalls, M.H.A., M.B.A.



---

**From:** Melanie <mazygymn@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 7, 2025 2:41 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Save elementary GT - from a 4th grader



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

Sent from my iPhone



I like that there is GT Math and CEU for science and social studies. It is important to me to have it because usually I don't like science and social studies but the CEU's are fun. Also, I learn more in the CEU's than in regular classes. For GT Math I wouldn't really learn anything if there wasn't a GT Math. I know this because the average level math classes are teaching stuff I learned last year. So, I wouldn't be really learning anything. Math class would be just a review. Also, I think the GT teachers, (Mrs. Parker and Mrs. Broudhurst), are really good at teaching GT. I really like their methods. This is why I believe GT Math and CEU's are important.

- Alexis, 4th Grade



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**From:** Rachel Castranova <castranova@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 7, 2025 10:27 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**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,

I'm writing as a concerned parent of both elementary and middle school students 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.

The GT Programs at my children's schools have benefitted both of my children tremendously. The GT programs have provided not only academic growth opportunities but social and emotional growth opportunities as well. As a parent of two boys with inattentive ADHD, the GT programs have been a lifesaver for keeping them motivated and able to find success at school. Additionally, the Paras were essential to my eldest's success in elementary school when he was struggling with language arts. The Paras also play an essential role in maintaining behavioral norms within the school setting, which is already challenging as I have seen in my time as a volunteer and/or lunch and recess monitor over the past 9 years. I am upset and concerned to learn that our elementary school is slated to lose Paras next year and fear the negative impact such losses will have on students and staff. Our schools cannot afford more cuts.

Please prioritize students and restore funding to HCPSS.

Thank you,

Rachel Castranova  
8454 Each Leaf Court  
Columbia, MD 21045

---

**From:** rhonda stokes <rasmith1us@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 7, 2025 9:09 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Restore Funding

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

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

I am writing to ask that the county council restore 29 million in funding to the HCPSS budget. We can't afford to lose GT teachers, and other programming. There are already so many behavioral issues in our elementary school in North Laurel- an increased class size will only make the violence worse. Our teachers can't handle increased class sizes.

Children deserve the chance to learn and I want my children to have the opportunity to learn in advanced subject areas. My son thrives in GT classes and it's the only reason he has any form of happiness in class because he's challenged. HCPSS is known for its academics and increasing class sizes and removing programming definitely lowers the standards. Do you want us to become PGCPs or AACPS? That's where we are headed. Invest in the children in this county.

---

**From:** Celina Abouzeid <celinaabouzeid@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 8, 2025 10:41 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Cc:** wassimdaccache@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Fully Fund HCPSS – Protect GT Programming at Manor Woods

**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 Members of the Howard County Council,

I'm writing as a deeply concerned parent of a student at Manor Woods Elementary School to urge you to fully fund the Howard County Public School System in the FY26 Operating Budget — particularly to preserve essential programs like Gifted and Talented (GT) education.

The proposed cut of 40 elementary GT teaching positions — nearly half of the current staff — is alarming. At Manor Woods, this reduction would shrink our GT team from 2.5 teachers to just 1. The impact would be immediate and profound: fewer enrichment opportunities, limited access to advanced learning, and the potential loss of a program that has been instrumental in challenging and engaging our students.

GT programming is not a luxury. It is a critical part of how we meet the diverse learning needs of our children and keep them excited and motivated in the classroom. These are students who thrive on depth, complexity, and creativity — and they deserve to be supported just like any other learner.

For years, HCPSS has operated under significant funding constraints. This year, the school system requires an additional \$29.2 million just to maintain existing services. Without it, we face not only cuts to GT, but larger class sizes, fewer teachers, and reduced support for all students.

Howard County has long been recognized for its excellence in public education. That excellence is now at risk. I respectfully ask that you prioritize our children and our schools by fully funding HCPSS in the FY26 budget. Let's continue to invest in the future of our county — and in the potential of every student.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to education.

Sincerely,

Celina Abouzeid  
305-607-1017

Sent from my iPhone

---

**From:** snap@howardcountymd.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, May 12, 2025 9:10 AM  
**To:** Smith, Brenda; Anderson, Isaiah; Gelwicks, Colette; Respass, Charity  
**Subject:** Case: CS0068004 – opened and unassigned



## Case

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

**Case Number:** CS0068004

**Case Opened:** 05-12-2025

**Constituent:**

[VIEW CASE](#)

**Details:**

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**05-12-2025 09:10:09 AM EDT - Christiana Rigby** Additional comments

From: Jing Bai <baijing0227@gmail.com>  
Sent: Thursday, May 8, 2025 3:43 PM  
To: CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>  
Subject: Please Fully Fund the HCPSS FY26 Budget

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

Dear Council Members,

My name is Jing, and I am a parent of a student at Manor Woods Elementary School. I am writing to respectfully urge you to fully fund the proposed HCPSS budget for the 2025–2026 school year.

I am particularly concerned about the proposed cuts to the Gifted and Talented (GT) program, including the reduction of 40 elementary GT teaching positions. These cuts would significantly reduce access to

enriched learning opportunities for students across the county—including at our own school, where staffing may be cut in half.

Programs like GT have made a meaningful difference in my child's education by providing academic challenge. Eliminating or reducing these opportunities would negatively impact not only current students, but the long-term strength of our school system.

I understand the budget process is complex, but I believe our students deserve full support. Please prioritize education and approve full funding for HCPSS.

Thank you for your time and service to our community.

Sincerely,  
Jing

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



Ref:MSG6129989



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**From:** katie collins <kcollins7491@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 8, 2025 2:56 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** GT Teachers at HoCo Elementary Schools Must Be Protected!!!!

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

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

Dear Howard County Council Members,

My child attends Waterloo Elementary, and the Gifted and Talented (GT) programs at the school serve a significant portion of students every year, fostering creativity, problem-solving, and intellectual growth. With nearly 70% of students in grades 2-5 participating in GT seminars this year, the importance of this program is undeniable.

Waterloo Elementary is a sample of the greater Howard County community. Even so, budgetary constraints mean the school system is currently considering reductions in staffing and programs to close a funding gap of \$29.2 million. This would put our county's Elementary GT teachers, and the students who rely on them, at risk.

As a parent to a kindergartner this year I cannot fathom the fact that my child could potentially miss out on these opportunities. Quite frankly I'm disgusted in our county that this is even being considered for our staff and students.

GT education should be a priority, not an afterthought. Please protect GT teachers in our schools.

Sincerely,

Katie Crump

**From:** snap@howardcountymd.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, May 12, 2025 9:09 AM  
**To:** Smith, Brenda; Anderson, Isaiah; Gelwicks, Colette; Respass, Charity  
**Subject:** Case: CS0067991 – opened and unassigned



## Case

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

**Case Number:** CS0067991

**Case Opened:** 05-12-2025

**Constituent:**

[VIEW CASE](#)

**Details:**

**05-12-2025 09:08:47 AM EDT - Christiana Rigby** Additional comments

From: Michele Kimes <michele.mcdonagh@gmail.com>  
Sent: Thursday, May 8, 2025 2:46 PM  
To: CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>  
Cc: Budget Testimony <BudgetTestimony@howardcountymd.gov>  
Subject: GT Programs at HoCo Elementary Schools Make a Difference.  
Don't Cut Them.

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

Dear Howard County Council Members,  
My children attend Waterloo Elementary School, I have a 1st grader and a 5th grader. I was also a student in the Howard County School system and I have seen firsthand (through my own experiences and through my children's experiences) how transformative the Gifted and Talented (GT) program has been.  
From Oyster Restoration to Robotics, GT offerings at Waterloo and other

schools provide enrichment that engages students in ways standard curriculum cannot.

However, the school system faces a projected funding gap of \$29.2 million. This shortfall has placed elementary GT teachers on the chopping block. Losing these educators means losing opportunities for students like mine, who have flourished in GT seminars.

This year, my son participated in a number of 5th grade seminars. One in particular was an incredible experience for him "The Money Game". He would come home and talk to me about taxes and making a budget. How there are things that we need vs what we want. This is an experience that without Mr. Croshler and Mrs. Smoot would not be possible. I want my first grader to have the same experiences that her brother has had.

Howard County has always been a coveted school system. Families move to this county just so they can send their children to one of the best public school systems in the country. What happened? Why are we not doing everything we can to be the best in the country... for our kids and our community.

Education should not be compromised due to financial limitations. I urge you to fully fund elementary GT teachers and programs.

Sincerely,  
Michele Kimes

--

Michele Kimes  
443-418-4304

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



Ref:MSG6129954

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**From:** Torie Grant <toriegrant@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 8, 2025 2:10 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Budget Testimony  
**Subject:** Prioritize our children- Add funding to FY26 HCPSS Operating Budget

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

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

Dear Howard County Council Members,

I am writing as a concerned HCPSS parent and Howard County resident to urge you to add funding to the HCPSS FY26 Operating Budget. HCPSS needs *at least* an additional \$29.2 million to keep our current level of services. Without any additional funding, HCPSS students will face larger class sizes, reductions in programs, and the loss of valued teachers and staff -- all of which negatively impact the quality of our children's education and hurt our community.

Our public schools should be a top priority for the county, but this feels less true in recent years. Many families with older children talk about the glory days of HCPSS when we had smaller classes and GT and music programs that weren't in danger of being cut year after year.

*Have you been inside a 3rd grade classroom with 29 kids with different needs and learning styles/abilities?* If not, PLEASE DO before cutting paraeducators, cutting GT teachers, and increasing class sizes. It's chaos. The thought of increasing class sizes (through either the loss of GT teachers or allowance of class size increases) and reducing ES paraeducators (who are crucial to teachers being able to effectively teach that many children with different learning needs) seems unconscionable. The classes are already too big. In middle school, they can have 34 students in a classroom. How can we allow any more than that?

Additionally, elementary GT teachers and 3rd grade strings are very important to Howard County families. Last year families rallied to save these 2 vital programs and groups of teachers. *The cost of saving these two programs is a fraction of the overall budget (\$4.7M), yet adds tremendous value to our schools, students, and community.* Elementary GT teachers in schools reduce the student-to-teacher ratios in 4th-5th grade math and 3rd-5th grade science and social studies. This allows for more individualized instruction and benefits learners of all abilities. One 5th grade teacher told me her class size drops from 29 students to 18 students during GT math. This is a significant reduction in class size and benefits ALL students.

GT seminars, which are open to all students, promote critical thinking and introduce young learners to STEM, art, history, government, mythology, and literature topics they don't have time to fully explore during regular class time. This March my daughter in 2nd grade attended a GT seminar to build a leprechaun trap where she applied physics, math, and art. My daughter in 5th grade participated in a GT seminar on Greek mythology last year where she fell in love with Greek mythology. Since then, she has

been continuously checking out books from the public library on Greek mythology and learning as much as possible on this fascinating topic, all thanks to a GT seminar. Reducing GT teachers will result in the reduction or complete elimination of GT seminars.

Elementary GT teachers work with the solid majority of students, as **67% of HCPSS elementary students participate in GT programs**. Early exposure to STEM is critical to fostering academic success. **Many families do not have the resources to provide replacement GT and strings programs to students outside of school**. Students in non-GT math classes will receive less support and less individualized attention as a result of these cuts. Cutting GT teachers hurts students of all abilities. As a county who prides itself on our education system, students of every ability level deserve the right to be challenged appropriately. These cuts undermine our values as a county.

I urge you to prioritize our students and schools by restoring the necessary funding to HCPSS. The children of Howard County are counting on you.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter and I look forward to working with you in the years to come.

Respectfully,

Torie Grant, MD, MHS  
HCPSS parent, concerned community member, and pediatrician

---

**From:** Li, Zhe (Zoe) <Zhe.Li@fda.hhs.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 8, 2025 11:49 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Restore Full Funding to HCPSS in FY26

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

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

Dear Howard County Council,

I am Dr. Zhe Li, a clinical pharmacology reviewer at FDA. I'm writing as a concerned parent and resident 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 children's school Manor Woods Elementary is already stretched thin. We can't afford more cuts. Currently my old child is in GT math program and a GT stem afterschool program. He enjoyed the knowledge the GT teachers offered in math, chemistry and American history. My younger child has not even enjoyed any of those yet and always looked forward to them as he heard his brother talking about the fascinating facts. Our education of this generation is something that should only leap forward and never backward at any price. We can not afford failing this young generation given the overwhelming corrosion of social media, short video clips, video games, let alone the recent budget cut of science and research whole country wide. All these are triggering a cascading effect on a major recession of intelligence, innovation, science, and technology etc. Your decision of funding education will be a critical turning point that can help America winning this battle for many years to come!

Please prioritize students and restore funding to HCPSS.

Thank you,  
Zhe  
Ellicott City

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**From:** Z Li <liztseng.li@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 8, 2025 11:37 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Restore Full Funding to HCPSS in FY26

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

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

Dear Howard County Council,

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 children's school Manor Woods Elementary is already stretched thin. We can't afford more cuts. Currently my old child is in GT math and a GT stem afterschool program. He enjoyed the knowledge the GT teachers offered in math, chemistry and American history. My younger child has not even enjoyed any of those yet and always looked forward to them as he heard his brother talking about the fascinating facts. Our education on this generation is something that should only leap forward and never backward at any price.

Please prioritize students and restore funding to HCPSS.

Thank you,  
Zoe Li  
Ellicott City

---

**From:** Jacob Smith <jacob.smith1470@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 9, 2025 6:47 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**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,

I'm writing as a concerned [parent/teacher/resident] 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.

Cutting GT programs is unacceptable. As someone who went through these programs, they were critical to my success as a student as well as in my career. Getting our future best and brightest kids in these programs is a success story for the student and the county. DO NOT CUT GT!

Please prioritize students and restore funding to HCPSS.

Thank you,  
Jacob Smith  
9754 Michaels Way  
Ellicott City, 21042



---

**From:** Michele Kimes <michele.mcdonagh@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 9, 2025 3:26 PM  
**To:** Ball, Calvin  
**Cc:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Fwd: GT Programs at HoCo Elementary Schools Make a Difference. Don't Cut Them.

**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,

I sent the below letter to the Howard County Council Members and I recieved a response asking for me to also send it to you since you are the one that can exercise your authority and assist the Council in restoring the funds.

My children attend Waterloo Elementary School, I have a 1st grader and a 5th grader. I was also a student in the Howard County School system and I have seen firsthand (through my own experiences and through my children's experiences) how transformative the Gifted and Talented (GT) program has been.

From Oyster Restoration to Robotics, GT offerings at Waterloo and other schools provide enrichment that engages students in ways standard curriculum cannot.

However, the school system faces a projected funding gap of \$29.2 million. This shortfall has placed elementary GT teachers on the chopping block. Losing these educators means losing opportunities for students like mine, who have flourished in GT seminars.

This year, my son participated in a number of 5th grade seminars. One in particular was an incredible experience for him "The Money Game". He would come home and talk to me about taxes and making a budget. How there are things that we need vs what we want. This is an experience that without Mr. Croshler and Mrs. Smoot would not be possible. I want my first grader to have the same experiences that her brother has had.

Howard County has always been a coveted school system. Families move to this county just so they can send their children to one of the best public school systems in the country. What happened? Why are we not doing everything we can to be the best in the country... for our kids and our community.

Education should not be compromised due to financial limitations. I urge you to fully fund elementary GT teachers and programs.

Sincerely,  
Michele Kimes

--  
Michele Kimes  
443-418-4304

---

**From:** Reginald Tan <rjtan13@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 10, 2025 10:30 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Cc:** Budget Testimony  
**Subject:** The Future of GT Programs at Elementary Schools

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

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

Dear Howard County Council Members,

Waterloo Elementary's Gifted and Talented (GT) program has long been instrumental in shaping young learners, providing enrichment opportunities that challenge students beyond the standard curriculum. However, due to budget constraints, elementary school GT educators are at risk.

The school system is facing a second consecutive year of severe cuts. Last year alone, Howard County made \$31.1 million in budget reductions, eliminating more than 192 positions. The FY 2026 budget shortfall is nearly identical, meaning GT programs may suffer further losses.

My child in 6th grade is thriving because of the GT programs in Waterloo and my hope and expectation is that my other child in 2nd grade would also have the opportunity to learn and experience the various GT programs in the future.

We cannot afford to weaken our schools any further. Please restore funding for elementary GT educators and ensure a bright future for all students.

Sincerely,

Reginald Tan

---

**From:** Julie Heiliger <julie.heiliger@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 12, 2025 10:35 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Cc:** Budget Testimony  
**Subject:** Preserve GT Programs at HoCo Elementary Schools

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

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

Dear Howard County Council Members,

I am writing to urge you to preserve elementary Gifted and Talented (GT) teachers in Howard County as you finalize the FY 2026 budget. At Waterloo Elementary alone, where my daughter attends, nearly 70% of students in grades 2-5 have participated in at least one GT seminar this year, demonstrating the critical role of enrichment programs in student success.

The FY 2026 budget allocates \$39.3 million in additional recurring funds to the school system, yet this amount is far short of the Board of Education's identified funding needs. If cuts are made, reductions to GT staffing and programming would be devastating for young learners who thrive in academically challenging environments.

In addition to GT Math, my daughter, Reese, has participated in MANY of the GT seminars at Waterloo. For example, last year she took photography. She was so inspired by that seminar that she asked her teacher to give her extra photography assignments over the summer! Reese even asked if she could assist him in hosting the seminar this past year. Her teacher graciously said yes, and one result is that Reese has grown in her ability to speak in front of groups as she has helped to review pictures that this year's photography students have taken.

Recently, Reese participated in Battle of the Books. Reading material she would not have otherwise read, working with a team, and having a good time while doing all of this has made for one of her favorite memories this school year.

These are just two examples out of many others that I could give.

GT teachers are integral to ensuring that education in Howard County remains strong. The opportunities they provide to young students is priceless. Please protect these programs and educators.

Sincerely,  
Julie Heiliger

---

**From:** Shae Gorham <qshaew@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 12, 2025 11:31 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Cc:** Budget Testimony  
**Subject:** GT Teachers at HoCo Elementary Schools Must Be Protected

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

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

Dear Howard County Council Members,

My children proudly attends Waterloo Elementary, and the Gifted and Talented (GT) programs at the school serve a significant portion of students every year, fostering creativity, problem-solving, and intellectual growth. With nearly 70% of students in grades 2-5 participating in GT seminars this year, the importance of this program is undeniable.

Waterloo Elementary is a sample of the greater Howard County community. Even so, budgetary constraints mean the school system is currently considering reductions in staffing and programs to close a funding gap of \$29.2 million. This would put our county's Elementary GT teachers, and the students who rely on them, at risk. My two children have been able to explore their interests and build upon their talents by way of involvement in GT seminars. As Parents, my Husband and I have noticed an increase in functional academic family time as we all get excited for photography assignments, watching our 4th grader solve difficult math olympiad problems, learning how to make an origami crane, brainstorming for build a game, or playing "no verbal speaking" games because we are using sign language to communicate for fun. GT education should be a priority, not an afterthought. Please protect GT teachers in our schools.

Sincerely,

**Shae Gorham, MFT, LCMFT**  
**Solid Ground Wellness, LLC**  
**Co-Founder/CEO/Therapist**  
**SolidGround@SGWellness.net**  
**Phone (443)-860-2549**

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**From:** Jason Harcum <jasonharcum@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 13, 2025 7:32 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Budget Testimony  
**Cc:** Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** Protect Gifted and Talented (GT) Programs at Elementary Schools

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

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

Dear Howard County leaders,

My child attends Waterloo Elementary School. At Waterloo E.S., nearly 70% of students in grades 2-5 have participated in at least one Gifted and Talented (GT) seminar this year. That number speaks volumes and is reflective of the greater Howard County community. These programs serve a critical need, providing enrichment that fuels creativity and problem-solving.

But with Howard County facing a funding gap to sustain existing services, GT programs are at risk. If GT teachers are removed in another round of budget cuts, then young learners will suffer the consequences.

Please prioritize funding for elementary GT educators and ensure students continue to receive the enrichment they need to thrive.

Sincerely,

Jason Harcum  
8370 Tamar Dr.  
(301)514-2459

---

**From:** Raj Burra <rajburra@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 13, 2025 11:59 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Restore Full Funding to HCPSS in FY26

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

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

Dear Howard County Council,

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.

As a parent, I already see how stretched the system is. **My child's school is operating with limited resources**, and our educators are doing everything they can under difficult conditions. Further cuts would be devastating.

One area we've heard is especially at risk is the **Gifted and Talented (GT) program**. This is extremely upsetting to our family. **My son worked very hard to qualify for the GT program**, and he was thrilled when he was selected. He was so excited to be part of a program that challenges him, inspires him, and recognizes his effort and potential. To now hear that the GT program could be scaled back or eliminated is heartbreaking. Programs like GT don't just support advanced learners they help keep students engaged, motivated, and confident.

Like many families, we chose to live in Howard County because of its strong public schools. We made a major financial commitment to buy a home here, one that would cost far less in a neighboring county and we pay **higher county taxes** with the understanding that our schools would be supported. Now, we're being asked to accept fewer resources and fewer opportunities for our children, even as we continue to invest in the county.

We love this community and want to see it thrive. That starts with protecting and strengthening our schools. I respectfully ask our county leaders to **fully fund HCPSS**, preserve essential programs like GT, and ensure every student in Howard County continues to have access to a high-quality education.

Please prioritize students and restore funding to HCPSS.

Thank you,  
Rajkumar Burra  
11530 Kirkleigh drive  
Marrotsville, MD 21104



---

**From:** snap@howardcountymd.gov  
**Sent:** Friday, May 16, 2025 9:43 AM  
**To:** Smith, Brenda; Anderson, Isaiah; Gelwicks, Colette; Respass, Charity  
**Subject:** Case: CS0068352 – opened and unassigned

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



## Case

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

**Case Number:** CS0068352

**Case Opened:** 05-16-2025

**Constituent:**

[VIEW CASE](#)

**Details:**

**05-16-2025 09:42:38 AM EDT - Christiana Rigby** Additional comments

From: Lisa Urso <urso.lisa@gmail.com>  
Sent: Wednesday, May 14, 2025 9:10 PM  
To: CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>; Budget Testimony <BudgetTestimony@howardcountymd.gov>  
Subject: Budget shortfall

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

Dear Howard County Council Members,

I very much appreciate the very difficult decisions that you have coming up with a huge budget shortfall and funds getting cut left and right. To say that it is an enviable job right now, would likely be an understatement. Thank

you so much for taking the time to read this and consider this in your decision making.

This also comes on the heels of the announcement yesterday to provide funding of \$14.5 million for schools to assist in balancing their budget deficit. I recognize that this means that we still have a budget shortfall of \$14.7 million that are going to require cuts.

I am a mother with currently 2 children attending Waterloo Elementary. I picked Howard County as my place of residence to get my children in quality schools.

In recognition of GT positions being eliminated, third grade strings, and paraeducators positions in limbo, I have to ask you to consider how much these children benefit from these programs. I was raised in education myself and the Jesuit philosophy of *curia personalis*, educating the entire person is so crucial to me.

The Waterloo teachers are pushing all of our students to be better, push harder and achieve more. I can't begin to express my gratitude, but, I also recognize what their absence would mean. It is not just a test score that you see, but, it does impact those test scores ultimately. It's the things that push the kids to grow in different ways and maybe just maybe do something sooooo outside their boxes, like Math Olympiad for my older daughter.

I have a daughter who just tested in second grade into advanced math. I would be heartbroken for her to lose that distinction as she moves forward. However, at the helm of all of that is actually the impact that these GT programs have on all of the kids. She is just getting to ability to use these programs to the fullest. She is also super excited also for the opportunity to begin violin next year. Music is hugely impactful to children's development.

My older daughter is one who is a good student, not a great student. She's likely on her way to becoming an educator in the future in fact. She has benefited from the GT programming that is being performed at Waterloo. She participated in over 1/2 of this programming offered to fifth grade this year. It is these programs that get her excited to come in everyday and try harder than yesterday. She is not gifted in math and came from another system deficient in many areas. She works harder than anyone I know and she pushed herself (and me) by completing Math Olympiad this year.

She gets so excited for Origami. She is going to participate in the Steam Fair this year because of her game. She wouldn't have picked to participate in that otherwise.

Fifth Grade GT Seminars:  
Design a Game

Battle of the Books  
The Basics of Building  
The Money Game  
Robotics  
Origami  
Math Olympiads

This year alone, here is what Mrs. Smoot and Mr. Croushler have offered our kids:

Second Grade GT Seminars:  
STEM Challenge  
Detective Club  
Landmark Construction  
Comics Club

Third Grade GT Seminars:  
Safe Racer  
Bridges  
Brain Busters  
Cryptology  
Bio Wax

Fourth Grade GT Seminars:  
Photography  
Oyster Restoration  
Math Olympiads  
American Sign Language  
Green Team

Fifth Grade GT Seminars:  
Design a Game  
Battle of the Books  
The Basics of Building  
The Money Game  
Robotics  
Origami  
Math Olympiads

Also, fourth and fifth graders, if they qualify, are offered GT Math. If the proposed cuts take place, Mr. Croushler is not sure that he will have separate GT Math classes moving forward; they may need to be integrated into the homerooms, which increases class sizes and takes away from these students ability to thrive.

The Waterloo GT teachers state that between 68-70% of students in grades 2-5 have participated in at least one seminar this year. So these offerings are clearly enjoyed and appreciated by our students!

Education should not be compromised due to financial limitations. I urge you to fully fund elementary GT teachers and programs.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Lisa Urso

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



Ref:MSG6153270

---

**From:** Lisa Urso <urso.lisa@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 14, 2025 9:10 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Budget Testimony  
**Subject:** Budget shortfall

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

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

Dear Howard County Council Members,

I very much appreciate the very difficult decisions that you have coming up with a huge budget shortfall and funds getting cut left and right. To say that it is an enviable job right now, would likely be an understatement. Thank you so much for taking the time to read this and consider this in your decision making.

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programs that get her excited to come in everyday and try harder than yesterday. She is not gifted in math and came from another system deficient in many areas. She works harder than anyone I know and she pushed herself (and me) by completing Math Olympiad this year.

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Fifth Grade GT Seminars:

- Design a Game
- Battle of the Books
- The Basics of Building
- The Money Game
- Robotics
- Origami
- Math Olympiads

This year alone, here is what Mrs. Smoot and Mr. Croushler have offered our kids:

Second Grade GT Seminars:

- STEM Challenge
- Detective Club
- Landmark Construction
- Comics Club

Third Grade GT Seminars:

- Safe Racer
- Bridges
- Brain Busters
- Cryptology
- Bio Wax

Fourth Grade GT Seminars:

- Photography
- Oyster Restoration
- Math Olympiads
- American Sign Language
- Green Team

Fifth Grade GT Seminars:

- Design a Game
- Battle of the Books
- The Basics of Building
- The Money Game
- Robotics
- Origami
- Math Olympiads

Also, fourth and fifth graders, if they qualify, are offered GT Math. If the proposed cuts take place, Mr. Croushler is not sure that he will have separate GT Math classes moving forward; they may need to be integrated into the homerooms, which increases class sizes and takes away from these students ability to thrive.

The Waterloo GT teachers state that between 68-70% of students in grades 2-5 have participated in at least one seminar this year. So these offerings are clearly enjoyed and appreciated by our students!

Education should not be compromised due to financial limitations. I urge you to fully fund elementary GT teachers and programs.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Lisa Urso

---

**From:** Toby Cung <tcung4432@inst.hcpss.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 15, 2025 6:45 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Restore Full Funding to HCPSS in FY26

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

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

Dear Howard County Council,

I'm writing as a concerned student 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 requires a minimum of \$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 is 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 School System share of the recurring General Fund Revenue has not kept up with historic norms and inflation.

I am a 6th-grade student at Ellicott Mills Middle School. I am an all-GT student and have been for 3 years since 4th grade. I heard that GT teaching positions and the number of GT math classes were being cut. If not for the GT classes I received in elementary school, I know I wouldn't be prepared for middle school GT. Also, I learned that Howard County is reducing the number of special needs helpers. Teachers have taught me to think about how I would feel if I were a special needs student. I know I would want as much help as I could get. Another thing is that for my GT Research class, I am studying how education budget cuts affect student learning. Over the past 12 weeks of my research, I have learned about how they do. Almost never do they affect students in a positive manner. So please do not cut more money from the budget so students like me can have a good education and learn a lot from school.

Please prioritize students and restore funding to HCPSS.

Thank you,

Toby Cung

District 1



**From:** snap@howardcountymd.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, May 19, 2025 10:08 AM  
**To:** Smith, Brenda; Anderson, Isaiah; Gelwicks, Colette; Respass, Charity  
**Subject:** Case: CS0068500 – opened and unassigned



## Case

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

**Case Number:** CS0068500

**Case Opened:** 05-19-2025

**Constituent:**

[VIEW CASE](#)

**Details:**

**05-19-2025 10:07:43 AM EDT - Christiana Rigby** Additional comments

From: Evan Riddle <eriddle13@hotmail.com>  
Sent: Friday, May 16, 2025 11:34 AM  
To: CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>  
Subject: Support for GT Instruction in HCPSS Elementary Schools

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

Hello,

I write to you today to encourage you to reconsider the option of eliminating GT staff at elementary schools due to budgetary issues. I've had two children who have had very positive experiences with GT instruction at Waterloo Elementary School, and I have another son who is very excited about this opportunity in the future as well. It would be greatly disheartening to see these types of opportunities for highly academically motivated students be eliminated due to budgetary issues they have no control over.

Being able to provide challenging and stimulating academic work that helps to produce hard working and high academic achieving students is a differentiating factor for HCPSS. Eliminating these opportunities will have a negative long-term impact on students that could hold some of them back from the academic growth and achievement they are capable of. I've witnessed this type of growth first-hand with both of my children who have had the opportunity to experience GT work in elementary school. Their academic stamina, critical thinking, and personal growth were all positively impacted by the GT content and instructor at their school. This has made the transition to middle school much easier for my oldest son, and I continue to see these great study habits and academic curiosity, which were formed through his participation in GT content, in his work to this day.

Please reconsider cutting GT funding for elementary schools due to budgetary issues. I can understand that due to the budget hard decisions must be made, but if there are other areas that do not have such a negative impact on our children that can be addressed I strongly encourage the Board to explore those options first.

Regards,

Evan Riddle

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



Ref:MSG6164587

**From:** snap@howardcountymd.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, May 19, 2025 10:07 AM  
**To:** Smith, Brenda; Anderson, Isaiah; Gelwicks, Colette; Respass, Charity  
**Subject:** Case: CS0068496 – opened and unassigned



## Case

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

**Case Number:** CS0068496

**Case Opened:** 05-19-2025

**Constituent:**

[VIEW CASE](#)

**Details:**

**05-19-2025 10:05:52 AM EDT - Christiana Rigby** Additional comments

From: Taylor Davis <Taylor\_Davis@hcpss.org>  
Sent: Friday, May 16, 2025 2:29 PM  
To: CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>  
Subject: GT program

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

Hello,

I write to you today to encourage you to reconsider the option of eliminating GT staff at elementary schools due to budgetary issues. I've had two children who have had very positive experiences with GT instruction at Waterloo Elementary School, and I have another son who is very excited about this opportunity in the future as well. It would be greatly disheartening to see these types of opportunities for highly academically motivated students be eliminated due to budgetary issues they have no control over.

Being able to provide challenging and stimulating academic work that helps to produce hard working and high academic achieving students is a differentiating factor for HCPSS. Eliminating these opportunities will have a negative long-term impact on students that could hold some of them back from the academic growth and achievement they are capable of. I've witnessed this type of growth first-hand with both of my children who have had the opportunity to experience GT work in elementary school. Their academic stamina, critical thinking, and personal growth were all positively impacted by the GT content and instructor at their school. This has made the transition to middle school much easier for my oldest son, and I continue to see these great study habits and academic curiosity, which were formed through his participation in GT content, in his work to this day.

Please reconsider cutting GT funding for elementary schools due to budgetary issues. I can understand that due to the budget hard decisions must be made, but if there are other areas that do not have such a negative impact on our children that can be addressed I strongly encourage the Board to explore those options first.

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howardcountymd.gov



Ref:MSG6164547

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**From:** snap@howardcountymd.gov  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 29, 2025 10:01 AM  
**To:** Smith, Brenda; Anderson, Isaiah; Gelwicks, Colette; Respass, Charity  
**Subject:** Case: CS0068927 – opened and unassigned

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



## Case

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

**Case Number:** CS0068927

**Case Opened:** 05-29-2025

**Constituent:**

[VIEW CASE](#)

**Details:**

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**05-29-2025 10:00:28 AM EDT - Christiana Rigby** Additional comments

From: Lisa Stechschulte <lisasteck@gmail.com>  
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 9:04 PM  
To: CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>  
Subject: Fund our schools!

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

Hello, County Council,

I am writing to urge you to keep Howard County the premier county in Maryland by covering the gap in the HCPSS budget to retain our reputation as an excellent county for raising kids.

My children attend Deep Run Elementary in 5th, 2nd, and PreK-3. They are thriving due to the outstanding GT program that enriches every student and gives gifted students the opportunity to excel while remaining part of our diverse community. My oldest has honed his focus, creativity, and teamwork skills through strings, which he began in 3rd grade. Losing GT and strings programs in the elementary school will hurt children who are not in a position to afford private lessons and tutors, including many families at Deep Run Elementary, deepening the economic opportunity divide.

Our family moved to Howard County for our excellent public schools. Please fund the budget gaps to ensure we do not lose our greatest county treasure.

Best,  
Lisa Stechschulte Lowe  
6426 Dry Barley Ln, Columbia, MD 21045

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



Ref:MSG6206898

---

**From:** Hannah <hnnh000@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 28, 2025 8:48 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** please add funds to HCPSS to avoid GT cuts

[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 am a parent of 4 children in Howard County Public Schools, including a rising 3rd grader and a rising first grader. I am very concerned about the potential cuts to 3rd grade GT. Please add funds to HCPSS to prevent the cuts.

Thank you,  
Hannah Polikov

---

**From:** snap@howardcountymd.gov  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 29, 2025 1:38 PM  
**To:** Smith, Brenda; Anderson, Isaiah; Gelwicks, Colette; Respass, Charity  
**Subject:** Case: CS0068953 – opened and unassigned



## Case

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

**Case Number:** CS0068953

**Case Opened:** 05-29-2025

**Constituent:**

[VIEW CASE](#)

**Details:**

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**05-29-2025 01:37:39 PM EDT - Christiana Rigby** Additional comments

From: Kelli Cheek Mobley <kelli.cheek@gmail.com>  
Sent: Wednesday, May 28, 2025 7:02 AM  
To: CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>  
Subject: Base Budget Reduction Considerations

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

Good morning:

In light of the new budget and proposed cuts with are asking to keep the vital services of GT teachers bd string instrument teachers. Our family has a beautifully talented son at Deep Run Elementary. He loves plying the viola and participating in GT activities. What can we do as taxpayers to support these programs.



Many thanks,  
Kelli Cheek Mobley

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



Ref:MSG6208945

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**From:** Lynn Spence <lbspence@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 28, 2025 2:32 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** GHifted and Galented Program

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

I taught GT in Howard County for 18 years. I had taught third grade for many years before that and loved it, but realized I was not a good teacher for the slower learners. I had 3 reading groups and 2 math groups every day. I did not fully appreciate how the slower learners learned and felt I was cheating them. So when a GT position opened up, I jumped at the chance.

I learned "in the trenches" and it was hard, but it was valuable and I learned quickly.

I did at least 5 preps a day, with a different group, a different grade level every hour. I had conferences with parents who were challenging. I had at least every year who would send their nanny to conference because they were too busy. Those kids needed to be heard and convinced that they were important.

That their questions deserved answers. I conferenced with parents who didn't speak English, but were too proud to ask for a translator. I had been counseled not to look them straight in the eyes because that was a sign of disrespect. They cared, but sitting and not understanding them was very stressful.

**If you ever doubt for one minute the importance of a GT program, think about the GT students at Glenwood Middle**

School who lost a friend and classmate, riding his bike without a helmet, and hit by a car. Their GT teacher helped them channel their grief into lobbying the state legislators to pass a bike helmet law. It passed, was the first one in the nation, was adopted by many more states, and has saved countless lives since then. Your Howard County GT teacher did that! Think about that for a minute!

My students used classified ads to find a job and an apartment. They were given a checkbook. They went to the grocery store to list what they would buy for a week and how much money they'd need. They were given a budget and wrote checks every week to pay their bills. A regular classroom teacher can't teach those skills to the number and variety of students they have. These kids think faster, learn faster, get their work done faster and become bored. Then they get in trouble because they're bored. They need someone to appreciate their talents and give credence to their questions. GT teachers teach them how to decide on a topic, find the sources they need, and go find the answers. I sometimes had to make the phone calls or write the letters because the sources wouldn't reply to children. I didn't want them to learn that they weren't important because they were young. They need to feel valued in the way they think and learn. My GT math students went outside every day for a week to record the colors of cars that passed by, compiled the data, and wrote to car manufacturers to see if their data matched theirs. They were so proud of themselves, and it was fun. They wouldn't get that in a regular classroom.

If you do not fund the GT Program you will be stifling these children and turning away their open and curious minds. Maybe the person who will find a cure for cancer or design an instrument to help get us to the moon and planets. With the demographics of Howard County, how can you deny these bright kids a chance?

I wrote letters. I walked to the capital in Annapolis and lobbied for funding for GT programs, because our kids are Special Ed too, just a different end of the spectrum. I wrote articles to try and turn around the notion that these kids don't need anything special, they're gonna get it anyway.

Don't kill all the potential that you have in your care. These kids deserve a chance to have their learning style validated, enforced, valued, and perpetuated. Every GT teacher has had the experience as I, has worked as hard, done the same challenging programs, and has sent their students on knowing that they have made a difference. Don't take that away from the students entrusted to your "care and feeding".

Lynn Spence

---

**From:** Upasana Bhatnagar <upasanabhatnagar@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 28, 2025 10:09 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** GT funding

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

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

Dear County Council

Cuts to the GT program will impact long term success of many howard county elementary students. During the time when the brain is developing fastest, fostering interest in learning about a vast array of topics through the curriculum extension units and other GT activities is imperative! These opportunities are the hallmark of the incredible teaching in Howard County and please prioritize them!

Thank you for your thoughtful approach and keeping in mind the deep responsibility you have to protect the future of our children, Dr Upasana Bhatnagar

---

**From:** Annie McLean <annie.w.mclean@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 3, 2025 8:45 AM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org  
**Cc:** Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Please Prioritize Teachers, Maintaining Class Sizes, GT, and Strings

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

Dear Board of Education,

In your upcoming budget deliberations, please prioritize allocating funds to retain our teachers. It is critical that we have our excellent educators to maintain class sizes without further increases, provide the great GT programming that HCPSS is known for, and maintain our excellent 3rd grade strings programs. These are all things that are central to our childrens' ability to thrive in school and also in life. My children love their teachers, GT, and strings, and it would be a great disservice to all HCPSS children to make these programs no longer available as these are the things that make them want to come to school and be engaged in their education. Further, studies have shown that participating in music at young ages has measurable benefits for childrens' brains. The GT programs are great not only for the kids who take them, but are also beneficial to all of the kids as they keep class sizes down and allow teachers who are teaching non-GT to focus on teaching kids of the same level and have minimal distractions in class.

Please do what is right for our teachers and kids by prioritizing these things in the budget.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Annie and Rob McLean

---

**From:** A H  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 11:36 AM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org; councilmail@howardcountymd.gov; cball@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Cut Transportation Costs, Not elementary GT 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 Board of Education,

As a parent of Centennial elementary school students in HCPSS, I urge you to preserve GT programs by reducing transportation costs. The recent decision to reverse established walk zones is contributing to the current budget shortfall. Not only does this change discourage safe and healthy walking options for many students, but it also introduces a recurring annual cost of \$1.2 million—funds that could be redirected to GT programs that play a critical role in advancing student learning and development. At a time when every dollar counts, please prioritize what matters most: educational excellence. Cut transportation costs—not GT programs.

Respectfully,

---

**From:** Jing Tian  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 11:32 AM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org; councilmail@howardcountymd.gov; cball@howardcountymd.gov  
**Subject:** Cut Transportation Costs, Not elementary GT 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 Board of Education,

As a parent of Centennial elementary school students in HCPSS, I urge you to preserve GT programs by reducing transportation costs. The recent decision to reverse established walk zones is contributing to the current budget shortfall. Not only does this change discourage safe and healthy walking options for many students, but it also introduces a recurring annual cost of \$1.2 million—funds that could be redirected to GT programs that play a critical role in advancing student learning and development. At a time when every dollar counts, please prioritize what matters most: educational excellence. Cut transportation costs—not GT programs.

Respectfully,

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Best,  
Jing



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**From:** snap@howardcountymd.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, June 9, 2025 10:37 AM  
**To:** Smith, Brenda; Anderson, Isaiah; Gelwicks, Colette; Respass, Charity  
**Subject:** Case: CS0069540 – opened and unassigned

**Flag Status:** Flagged



## Case

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

**Case Number:** CS0069540

**Case Opened:** 06-09-2025

**Constituent:**

[VIEW CASE](#)

**Details:**

**06-09-2025 10:36:22 AM EDT - Christiana Rigby** Additional comments

From: nidhi pancholi <nidhi\_pancholi@hotmail.com>  
Sent: Thursday, June 5, 2025 2:45 PM  
To: Ball, Calvin <cball@howardcountymd.gov>; Ahmad, Yousuf <yahmad@howardcountymd.gov>; Thompson, Paul <pathompson@howardcountymd.gov>; CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>; boe@hcpss.org; boardoffice@hcpss.org  
Subject: Support Our Students: Preserve GT Teacher Positions

[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 Board of Education,

As a parent, I am deeply concerned about the proposed cuts to GT (Gifted and Talented) teachers announced on June 4. In previous communications, there were assurances that our school system had the necessary resources to avoid reductions in staff and services. However, the latest announcement indicating additional cuts to GT elementary school teachers is troubling.

Having lived in this county for over nine years, our family has come to deeply value the GT program. Our children have greatly benefited from its enrichment opportunities and academic challenges. Reducing the number of GT teachers, as currently proposed, will undoubtedly lead to larger class sizes and place an even greater burden on the remaining educators. More importantly, our students depend on these programs to fully support their academic and personal growth.

As a concerned member of this community, I respectfully urge you to explore all possible avenues to secure the necessary funding to maintain the GT program. Our children are the future of this county, and it is our collective responsibility to ensure they receive the support and education they deserve.

Sincerely,  
Nidhi Pancholi

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



Ref:MSG6253879

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**From:** Lauren Scott Janssen <l.scott.janssen@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 6, 2025 1:09 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** Proposed Elementary School GT Teacher cuts

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

Good afternoon,

I am a parent of two students at Deep Run Elementary School, as well as a member of the HCPSS GT Advisory Committee. I was incredibly dismayed to see the proposed cuts to GT teachers at the elementary level. At a Title 1 and Community School like Deep Run, this kind of cut will be incredibly detrimental to students who might otherwise not get this kind of educational opportunity. It is because we have two GT teachers that students are able to receive enhanced curriculum opportunities and additional instruction at all grade levels, not to mention the enrichment clubs, lunch bunches, and other offerings. The suggestion that the classroom teachers will take on this responsibility is ludicrous...it is something that will not happen. The reason we need GT staff is because classroom teachers are managing behavior and the significant number of students who are under grade level.

I work for BCPS as a school social worker in an elementary school and we do not have a GT program here. The school demographics are surprisingly similar to Deep Run, and yet our academics are significantly lower. A strong GT program is what makes HCPSS stand out as a district with the top academics in the state. This cut, if implemented, will result in lower test scores, less engaged students, and students who slip through the cracks academically. I know that funding in all school districts is complicated in today's federal landscape, but as someone extremely familiar with the elementary experience at a school in a more underprivileged area of the county, as well as the GT program, I urge you to look elsewhere and not make cuts to GT staff.

Sincerely,  
Lauren Janssen

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**From:** Jigsa Duguma <jigsad@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, June 8, 2025 9:22 PM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org  
**Cc:** Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Community feedback on Remaining \$9M Budget Reductions

**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 am a concerned parent of a Howard county students and writing to express my deep concern regarding the proposed \$9 million budget reduction for the upcoming fiscal year, and its potential devastating impact on our students, particularly those enrolled in Gifted and Talented (GT) programs.

While fiscal responsibility is paramount, I strongly urge the Board to prioritize the preservation of essential educational programs and services. The proposed cuts, particularly those affecting GT programs, threaten to significantly diminish the opportunities available to our most academically advanced students. Our experience with the current system highlights the existing strain on resources. Even now, securing a place in the GT program for our son, who demonstrates exceptional aptitude in mathematics, has proven challenging due to insufficient staffing. The proposed reduction of 39 elementary GT positions would exacerbate this problem drastically.

The example of Northfield Elementary, where a reduction from 2.5 GT teachers to just one is contemplated, is particularly alarming. This would lead to a cascade of negative consequences.

The reduction would necessitate larger class sizes in mathematics for grades 3-5, hindering individualized attention and personalized learning crucial for gifted students.

Instead of targeting essential programs like GT, I strongly recommend exploring alternative avenues for achieving fiscal responsibility. A thorough review of administrative expenses and non-essential travel could yield significant savings without compromising the educational well-being of our children. We must ensure that Howard County remains a beacon of educational excellence, providing enriching opportunities for all students, including those who demonstrate exceptional talent and potential.

I urge the Board to reconsider these proposed cuts and prioritize the preservation of our vital GT programs. The long-term consequences of these reductions on our students' academic success and overall well-being far outweigh any short-term budgetary gains. I am available to discuss these concerns further at your convenience.

Sincerely,  
Jigsa Duguma

Saint Johns Ln, Ellicott City, MD 21042

**From:** snap@howardcountymd.gov  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 12, 2025 10:16 AM  
**To:** Smith, Brenda; Anderson, Isaiah; Gelwicks, Colette; Respass, Charity  
**Subject:** Case: CS0069882 – opened and unassigned

**Flag Status:** Flagged



## Case

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

**Case Number:** CS0069882

**Case Opened:** 06-12-2025

**Constituent:**

[VIEW CASE](#)

**Details:**

**06-12-2025 10:16:12 AM EDT - Christiana Rigby** Additional comments

From: Corey Gillard <coreygillard@gmail.com>  
Sent: Tuesday, June 10, 2025 6:38 AM  
To: board@hcpss.org; CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>;  
Ball, Calvin <cball@howardcountymd.gov>  
Cc: Carrie Gillard <carriegillard09@gmail.com>  
Subject: Budget Shortfall

[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, County Council  
and County Executive,

I'll skip the template and get to the point. We have to solve the budget

shortfall in more creative ways than yanking GT programs from our schools.

My wife and I have been Howard County residents for 7 years and we just signed contracts to build a new house here in Howard County. We didn't take that decision lightly, but we committed to Howard County because we know the schools here are second to none. If you remove or reduce these essential parts of our schools, our schools will not produce results at the highest level, which is obviously what draws a lot of people to live in this county.

Our oldest daughter is starting GT math next year, and she's very excited about it. We're excited to see her challenged more.

If anything, please cut elsewhere. Cut travel, cut consultants, re-structure contracts to add days to your payment terms with vendors, re-negotiate rates with vendors, but PLEASE do not leave any stone unturned. If you need help, please reach out, my wife and I have both been involved in cash preservation scenarios at multiple companies and can help as needed. Penalizing our brightest students with the highest potential is not the answer.

Many thanks!

Best regards,

Corey & Carrie Gillard

Our kids go to West Friendship Elementary School

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



Ref:MSG6286886

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**From:** Jessica liu <jieliu2017@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 9, 2025 11:46 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Please Ensure Full Funding to Avoid Cuts to Elementary GT Teachers

**Flag Status:** Flagged

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

Dear Council members,

As a concerned parent in Howard County, I am writing to respectfully urge you and the Board of Education to ensure full funding of the HCPSS FY26 Operating Budget in a way that protects essential instructional programs, especially the Elementary Gifted and Talented (GT) program.

According to the budget documents and recent communications, Howard County and the State have provided over \$107 million in new or available funding for FY26—including \$53.5 million in new County funding, \$30.3 million in available HCPSS balances, and \$23.5 million in projected State Aid. These significant resources reflect our community's strong commitment to public education.

Given these funding levels, I believe there is a real opportunity to avoid the devastating cuts proposed in Scenario 7, including the elimination of nearly half of GT teaching positions and the 3rd grade strings program. The HCPSS Health Fund balance and other internal sources offer flexibility, and the County Executive's letter expresses confidence that the Board of Education can balance the budget without cutting core instructional staff.

The Elementary GT program is not a luxury—it is a vital part of differentiated learning that ensures students at all levels are challenged and supported. Cutting this program would be a long-term disservice to our children and our community.

Please work with the Board of Education to direct available resources toward maintaining teaching positions and core programs. We have the funding. Let's use it wisely to protect what matters most—our children's education.

Thank you for your continued leadership and support of our schools.

Sincerely,  
Jie Liu  
School District 1  
Concerned Parent

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**From:** Jamfreed <jamfreed@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 11, 2025 11:05 PM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** Please do not cut GT programs

**Flag Status:** Flagged

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

Hello,

I am asking, begging, for you to reconsider cutting GT teachers and therefore GT programs. I have a son at Phelps Luck Elementary School who absolutely loves his GT teachers. Have you ever had a child who wasn't challenged in school? Who is bored, unhappy, sad, frustrated, mad because the pace of their education isn't fast enough? Have you ever had a teacher tell you that your child asked when they would teach him something he doesn't know? Just as I believe special education is so important for the kids that need it, the GT program is also so important for kids that need it. Not all kids fit in the same box, learning needs are on a spectrum. A kid who is isn't challenged will cause just as much trouble as a kid who isn't receiving special education services that needs it. I feel so lucky that my child is currently thriving academically being in an environment where he is challenged. I fear what will happen if that is taken away from him. Please please reconsider and continue to fund GT teachers. From one scared Howard County parent.

Jamie Freedman

Sent from my iPhone



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**From:** snap@howardcountymd.gov  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 12, 2025 9:50 AM  
**To:** Smith, Brenda; Anderson, Isaiah; Gelwicks, Colette; Respass, Charity  
**Subject:** Case: CS0069864 – opened and unassigned



## Case

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

**Case Number:** CS0069864

**Case Opened:** 06-12-2025

**Constituent:**

[VIEW CASE](#)

**Details:**

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**06-12-2025 09:49:33 AM EDT - Christiana Rigby** Additional comments

From: Jason <jcohen@facilitysystems.com>  
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 12:30 AM  
To: CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>; Ball, Calvin  
<cball@howardcountymd.gov>  
Subject: Howard County BOE Budget- GT Program

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

Hello,

Please find attached written testimony requesting your support to address an issue critical to your constituents in Clarksville.

Thank you,

Jason and Jordan Cohen

Ref:MSG6286528

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**From:** Joan.annie.della Parambi <joan.parambi@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 11, 2025 6:04 PM  
**To:** BOE@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** Preserve the Gifted and Talented Program in Our School Budget

**Flag Status:** Flagged

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

To , The Superintendent / School Board Members,

I am writing to express my deep concern about the potential removal or reduction of funding for the Gifted and Talented program in HoCo . As a parent , I have seen firsthand the critical role this program plays in meeting the needs of high-potential learners as both my children were part of this program .

The GT program provides essential academic challenge, creative stimulation, and emotional support for students who may otherwise become disengaged in a traditional classroom setting. These students often require a different pace, depth, and method of instruction to remain motivated and reach their full potential.

Eliminating or cutting back this program would not only hinder their growth, but also send the message that advanced learners are less of a priority. Equity in education means meeting the needs of all students — including those who require enrichment beyond the standard curriculum.

Moreover, research consistently shows that when gifted students are not adequately challenged, they may experience boredom, anxiety, or underachievement. The GT program has helped prevent this by offering a space where students can explore complex ideas, develop leadership skills, and connect with peers who share their intellectual curiosity.

MS. Manguilli at Dayton Oaks has been truly inspirational and the main reason my children have taken an extra interest in Math and able to pursue accelerated courses in Middle School.

Please preserve the Gifted and Talented program for the benefit of students who depend on it to thrive — and for a school community that values excellence, equity, and potential in all its forms.

Sincerely  
Joan Parambi  
Highland - District 5  
Sent from my iPhone

---

**From:** Ankit Vachhani <ankit.vachhani@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 12, 2025 12:26 PM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail; bill\_barnes@hcpss.org  
**Cc:** Lori Speelman; Aaron Tark; amanda\_wadsworth@hcpss.org  
**Subject:** Funding Cuts to GT Programs

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

County Executive Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Superintendent Barnes:

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my serious concern and strong opposition to the proposed cuts to the district's Gifted and Talented (GT) program. As a parent of a student in the GT program at Hollifield Station Elementary School, I am shocked and dismayed that Howard County is even *considering* cutting funding for our brightest prospects.

These reductions signal a troubling disregard for the needs of advanced learners and risk undermining the academic potential of some of our district's most capable students. Gifted students have unique educational needs that cannot be met through general instruction alone. When these students are not appropriately challenged, the consequences are clear: disengagement, underachievement, and in some cases, behavioral issues born of frustration and boredom. Cutting GT programming undercuts the district's stated commitment to equity and excellence by denying students an environment in which they can grow at the pace and depth they require.

It is a mistake to assume that high-achieving students will "be fine" on their own. They will not -- without targeted resources, specialized instruction, and a peer group that pushes them intellectually. A truly equitable school system must serve the needs of all students, including those who are academically advanced. Dismantling GT programming in the name of equity is not reform; it is negligence.

I have met hundreds of people who have matriculated through Howard County's education system, and remain in the county with the hope that they can have their children enjoy the same high quality experience. With this in mind, I specifically moved to Howard County for the schools. But I am in absolute disbelief with the current state and situation of our education system.

Just yesterday, I attended Hollifield Station's annual Blacktop Party, where I learned that one of my son's GT classmates and their older two siblings will be transitioning out of the county's school systems to attend a private school. The parents indicated that they are fed up with the quality of the education and the persistent behavioral issues in the classrooms, and the inaction of school administration to remediate these issues promptly.

Based on personal experience, experiences of my friends and neighbors, and the current trends, I am questioning the quality of my decision to move to Howard County... and I am sure others will be doing the same. And I dearly hope the Board of Education and County leadership understand the long-term implications of even *considering* a proposal to cut GT funding.

Reducing or eliminating GT programs will have long-term consequences for our county's economic vitality. Strong public schools, especially those with robust advanced academic options, are a key factor in attracting and retaining families who prioritize education. Undermining these programs makes the district less attractive to high-skill professionals, business owners, and others who contribute significantly to the local tax base. As these families choose to relocate or enroll their children elsewhere, the overall quality of the students' peer groups will decline, negatively impacting the county's attractiveness, resulting in lowered property values and exposing the school system to further funding challenges by creating a negative feedback loop that harms all students, not just those in advanced tracks. This is not just an educational issue, it is a community sustainability issue.

I urge the Board to reconsider these cuts immediately and transparently. I also request a public accounting of the rationale, impact assessments, and what alternatives are being provided to ensure our most gifted students do not fall through the cracks. Families in this district deserve clarity, and our students deserve better.

Sincerely,  
Ankit Vachhani

---

**From:** Anupam Bhavsar <anu5450@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 12, 2025 12:45 PM  
**To:** bill\_barnes@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** GT program

**Flag Status:** Flagged

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

County Executive Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Superintendent Barnes:

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my serious concern and strong opposition to the proposed cuts to the district's Gifted and Talented (GT) program. As a parent of a student in the GT program at Hollifield Station Elementary School, I am shocked and dismayed that Howard County is even considering cutting funding for our brightest prospects.

These reductions signal a troubling disregard for the needs of advanced learners and risk undermining the academic potential of some of our district's most capable students. Gifted students have unique educational needs that cannot be met through general instruction alone. When these students are not appropriately challenged, the consequences are clear: disengagement, underachievement, and in some cases, behavioral issues born of frustration and boredom. Cutting GT programming undercuts the district's stated commitment to equity and excellence by denying students an environment in which they can grow at the pace and depth they require.

It is a mistake to assume that high-achieving students will "be fine" on their own. They will not -- without targeted resources, specialized instruction, and a peer group that pushes them intellectually. A truly equitable school system must serve the needs of all students, including those who are academically advanced. Dismantling GT programming in the name of equity is not reform; it is negligence.

I have met hundreds of people who have matriculated through Howard County's education system, and remain in the county with the hope that they can have their children enjoy the same high quality experience. With this in mind, I specifically moved to Howard County for the schools. But I am in absolute disbelief with the current state and situation of our education system. I dearly hope the Board of Education and County leadership understand the long-term implications of even considering a proposal to cut GT funding.

Reducing or eliminating GT programs will have long-term consequences for our county's economic vitality. Strong public schools, especially those with robust advanced academic options, are a key factor in attracting and retaining families who prioritize education. Undermining these programs makes the district less attractive to high-skill professionals, business owners, and others who contribute significantly to the local tax base. As these families choose to relocate or enroll their children elsewhere, the overall quality of the students' peer groups will decline, negatively impacting the county's attractiveness, resulting in lowered property values and exposing the school system to further funding

challenges by creating a negative feedback loop that harms all students, not just those in advanced tracks. This is not just an educational issue, it is a community sustainability issue.

I urge the Board to reconsider these cuts immediately and transparently. I also request a public accounting of the rationale, impact assessments, and what alternatives are being provided to ensure our most gifted students do not fall through the cracks. Families in this district deserve clarity, and our students deserve better.



---

**From:** jaimin shah <jd121631@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 12, 2025 1:58 PM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail; bill\_barnes@hcpss.org  
**Subject:** Oppose regarding Cuts to GT Program in HCPSS

**Flag Status:** Flagged

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

Respected  
County Executive Ball  
members of the Howard County Council  
members of the Howard County Board of Education and Superintendent Barnes

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my serious concern and strong opposition to the proposed cuts to the district's Gifted and Talented (GT) program. As a parent of a student in the GT program at Hollifield Station Elementary School, I am shocked and dismayed that Howard County is even considering cutting funding for our brightest prospects.

These reductions signal a troubling disregard for the needs of advanced learners and risk undermining the academic potential of some of our district's most capable students. Gifted students have unique educational needs that cannot be met through general instruction alone. When these students are not appropriately challenged, the consequences are clear: disengagement, underachievement, and in some cases, behavioral issues born of frustration and boredom. Cutting GT programming undercuts the district's stated commitment to equity and excellence by denying students an environment in which they can grow at the pace and depth they require.

It is a mistake to assume that high-achieving students will "be fine" on their own. They will not -- without targeted resources, specialized instruction, and a peer group that pushes them intellectually. A truly equitable school system must serve the needs of all students, including those who are academically advanced. Dismantling GT programming in the name of equity is not reform; it is negligence.

I have met hundreds of people who have matriculated through Howard County's education system, and remain in the county with the hope that they can have their children enjoy the same high quality experience. With this in mind, I specifically moved to Howard County for the schools. But I am in absolute disbelief with the current state and situation of our education system. I dearly hope the Board of Education and County leadership understand the long-term implications of even considering a proposal to cut GT funding.

Reducing or eliminating GT programs will have long-term consequences for our county's economic vitality. Strong public schools, especially those with robust advanced academic options, are a key factor in attracting and retaining families who prioritize education. Undermining these programs makes the district less attractive to high-skill professionals, business owners, and others who contribute significantly to the local tax base. As these families choose to relocate or enroll their children elsewhere, the overall quality of the students' peer groups will decline, negatively impacting the county's attractiveness, resulting in lowered property values and exposing the school system to further funding challenges by creating a negative feedback loop that harms all students, not just those in advanced tracks. This is not just an educational issue, it is a community sustainability issue.

I urge the Board to reconsider these cuts immediately and transparently. I also request a public accounting of the rationale, impact assessments, and what alternatives are being provided to ensure our most gifted students do not fall through the cracks. students in Howard County deserve better.  
Thank you very much.

--

Jaimin Shah  
# (410) 212-1568

---

**From:** Jhonna Seifert <Jhonna\_Seifert@hcpss.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 12, 2025 9:32 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** In Collaboration

**Flag Status:** Flagged

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

FYI - several GT teachers sent this joint message to the BOE

Dear Board Members,

As educators we have worked with students from a host of socioeconomic, cultural, experiential, and academic backgrounds. Our primary goal is ALWAYS to meet the needs of each student and we value equity. We are a group of committed GT resource teachers that have been paying close attention...

As we currently understand it, some of the BOE members feel that the current structure of the GT program is inequitable and they desire significant changes to the program. The solution currently on the table is to reduce the number of GT Resource teachers to 1 per school and consequently transfer the currently required differentiated components to the classroom teachers with our support and also to reduce the talent development opportunities that we have been working to expand.

We recognize that changes in the GT program are expected in the 25-26 school year, and we are willing and desire to be a part of that process in order to best meet the needs of all students in HCPSS. While our thoughts may differ on some of these items, we are committed to doing the hard work of assessing, analyzing & refining our program within the MD framework and in collaboration with other school and community stakeholders to ensure it best meets the needs of all HCPSS students. We would love to be in conversations and analyze with the board our data across the county. Additionally, Debbie Blum, our GT Coordinator has expressed a desire to engage in collaborative discussions for the continuous improvement of the program. I think we can agree that we all want what is best for the students of HCPSS and desire to “SEE” each student meet their unique potential as is referenced in [Policy 2000](#) referenced below.

## II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to articulate the authority and responsibilities of the Board that are critical to its effective and efficient operation.

## III. Standards

### A. Beliefs

*b. Each child is unique and has special abilities and interests that must be recognized*

*and developed.*

**Effective** and **quality** change requires time, thoughtful planning & expertise. Please restore our positions so that we can give this change the time, dedication and planning that both it and ultimately ***our students deserve.***

In Collaboration,

Jhonna Seifert (she/her/hers)  
GT Resource Teacher  
Atholton Elementary/Clemens Crossing  
**AES Rainbow Rep**



---

**From:** Kaajal Ahuja <kaajalahuja@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 12, 2025 12:40 PM  
**To:** bill\_barnes@hcpss.org  
**Cc:** CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin  
**Subject:** Please don't cut GT budgets

**Flag Status:** Flagged

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

County Executive Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Superintendent Barnes:

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my serious concern and strong opposition to the proposed cuts to the district's Gifted and Talented (GT) program. As a parent of a student in the GT program at Hollifield Station Elementary School, I am shocked and dismayed that Howard County is even considering cutting funding for our brightest prospects.

These reductions signal a troubling disregard for the needs of advanced learners and risk undermining the academic potential of some of our district's most capable students. Gifted students have unique educational needs that cannot be met through general instruction alone. When these students are not appropriately challenged, the consequences are clear: disengagement, underachievement, and in some cases, behavioral issues born of frustration and boredom. Cutting GT programming undercuts the district's stated commitment to equity and excellence by denying students an environment in which they can grow at the pace and depth they require.

It is a mistake to assume that high-achieving students will "be fine" on their own. They will not -- without targeted resources, specialized instruction, and a peer group that pushes them intellectually. A truly equitable school system must serve the needs of all students, including those who are academically advanced. Dismantling GT programming in the name of equity is not reform; it is negligence.

I have met hundreds of people who have matriculated through Howard County's education system, and remain in the county with the hope that they can have their children enjoy the same high quality experience. With this in mind, I specifically moved to Howard County for the schools. But I am in absolute disbelief with the current state and situation of our education system. I dearly hope the Board of Education and County leadership understand the long-term implications of even considering a proposal to cut GT funding.

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I urge the Board to reconsider these cuts immediately and transparently. I also request a public accounting of the rationale, impact assessments, and what alternatives are being provided to ensure our most gifted students do not fall through the cracks. Families in this district deserve clarity, and our students deserve better.

Thanks,  
Kaajal  
Sent from my iPhone

---

**From:** puru vonteru <vonteru@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 12, 2025 1:11 PM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail; bill\_barnes@hcpss.org  
**Subject:** concern and strong opposition to the proposed cuts to the district's Gifted and Talented (GT) program

**Flag Status:** Flagged

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

County Executive Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Superintendent Barnes:

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my serious concern and strong opposition to the proposed cuts to the district's Gifted and Talented (GT) program. As a parent of a student in the GT program at Hollifield Station Elementary School, I am shocked and dismayed that Howard County is even considering cutting funding for our brightest prospects.

These reductions signal a troubling disregard for the needs of advanced learners and risk undermining the academic potential of some of our district's most capable students. Gifted students have unique educational needs that cannot be met through general instruction alone. When these students are not appropriately challenged, the consequences are clear: disengagement, underachievement, and in some cases, behavioral issues born of frustration and boredom. Cutting GT programming undercuts the district's stated commitment to equity and excellence by denying students an environment in which they can grow at the pace and depth they require.

It is a mistake to assume that high-achieving students will "be fine" on their own. They will not -- without targeted resources, specialized instruction, and a peer group that pushes them intellectually. A truly equitable school system must serve the needs of all students, including those who are academically advanced. Dismantling GT programming in the name of equity is not reform; it is negligence.

I have met hundreds of people who have matriculated through Howard County's education system, and remain in the county with the hope that they can have their children enjoy the same high quality experience. With this in mind, I specifically moved to Howard County for the schools. But I am in absolute disbelief with the current state and situation of our education system. I dearly hope the Board of Education and County leadership understand the long-term implications of even considering a proposal to cut GT funding.

Reducing or eliminating GT programs will have long-term consequences for our county's economic vitality. Strong public schools, especially those with robust advanced academic options, are a key factor in attracting and retaining families who prioritize education. Undermining these programs makes the district less attractive to high-skill professionals, business owners, and others who contribute significantly to the local tax base. As these families choose to relocate or enroll their children elsewhere, the overall quality of the students' peer groups will decline, negatively impacting the county's

attractiveness, resulting in lowered property values and exposing the school system to further funding challenges by creating a negative feedback loop that harms all students, not just those in advanced tracks. This is not just an educational issue, it is a community sustainability issue.

I urge the Board to reconsider these cuts immediately and transparently. I also request a public accounting of the rationale, impact assessments, and what alternatives are being provided to ensure our most gifted students do not fall through the cracks. Families in this district deserve clarity, and our students deserve better.

Thank you,  
Puru Vonteru



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**From:** Rich C. <rich.chiovarelli@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 12, 2025 8:11 AM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org  
**Cc:** superintendent@hcpss.org; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Community Input on Remaining \$9M Budget Reductions

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Dear Members of the Howard County Board of Education,

I am a member of the Howard County community, I am writing because I am very concerned about 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, specifically Elementary G/T (Gifted and Talented) positions.

My family and I moved here 2 years ago in large part for the school system. Making the proposed cuts to Elementary G/T (Gifted and Talented) positions would significantly decrease the quality of the education students are receiving. My son is in G/T programs and has greatly enjoyed and benefited from his coursework with the G/T teachers, Bobbi Guizotti and Evelyn Calamari, this year. Losing these Elementary G/T positions and teachers would be devastating. G/T Math and G/T Science have been the highlight of my son's school year. Cutting any G/T positions would place the responsibility of teaching G/T curriculum on classroom teachers, who do not have the experience in teaching the core standards of higher level curriculum. Also, cutting any G/T positions will cause an increase in class size, and we all know that lower student-to-teacher ratios are extremely important to students' educational success. Parents are talking about putting their children in private schools if these cuts are made. To preserve the educational quality that defines our community I strongly urge you all to retain G/T positions.

Thank you for your consideration, thoughtful deliberation, and continued commitment to transparency and student-centered decisions.

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard Chiovarelli  
Northfield Elementary School parent

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**From:** srinivas sindam <srsindam@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 12, 2025 4:38 PM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail; bill\_barnes@hcpss.org  
**Subject:** County board of education

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Hi County Executive Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Superintendent Barnes:

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my serious concern and strong opposition to the proposed cuts to the district's Gifted and Talented (GT) program. As a parent of a student in the GT program at Hollifield Station Elementary School, I am shocked and dismayed that Howard County is even considering cutting funding for our brightest prospects.

I urge the Board to reconsider these GT programs immediately and transparently. I also request a public accounting of the rationale, impact assessments, and what alternatives are being provided to ensure our most gifted students do not fall through the cracks. Families in this district deserve clarity, and our students deserve better.

Thanks,  
Sreenivas

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**From:** Sunil Ahuja <ahuja\_sunil@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 12, 2025 1:18 PM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail; bill\_barnes@hcpss.org  
**Subject:** GT Programs (Proposed Cuts)

**Flag Status:** Flagged

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County Executive Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Superintendent Barnes:

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my serious concern and strong opposition to the proposed cuts to the district's Gifted and Talented (GT) program. As a parent of a student in the GT program at Hollifield Station Elementary School, I am shocked and dismayed that Howard County is even considering cutting funding for our brightest prospects.

These reductions signal a troubling disregard for the needs of advanced learners and risk undermining the academic potential of some of our district's most capable students. Gifted students have unique educational needs that cannot be met through general instruction alone. When these students are not appropriately challenged, the consequences are clear: disengagement, underachievement, and in some cases, behavioral issues born of frustration and boredom. Cutting GT programming undercuts the district's stated commitment to equity and excellence by denying students an environment in which they can grow at the pace and depth they require.

It is a mistake to assume that high-achieving students will "be fine" on their own. They will not -- without targeted resources, specialized instruction, and a peer group that pushes them intellectually. A truly equitable school system must serve the needs of all students, including those who are academically advanced. Dismantling GT programming in the name of equity is not reform; it is negligence.

I have met hundreds of people who have matriculated through Howard County's education system, and remain in the county with the hope that they can have their children enjoy the same high quality experience. With this in mind, I specifically moved to Howard County for the schools. But I am in absolute disbelief with the current state and situation of our education system. I dearly hope the Board of Education and County leadership understand the long-term implications of even considering a proposal to cut GT funding.

Reducing or eliminating GT programs will have long-term consequences for our county's economic vitality. Strong public schools, especially those with robust advanced academic options, are a key factor in attracting and retaining families who prioritize education. Undermining these programs makes the district less attractive to high-skill professionals, business owners, and others who contribute significantly to the local tax base. As these families choose to relocate or enroll their children elsewhere, the overall quality of the students' peer groups will decline, negatively impacting the county's

attractiveness, resulting in lowered property values and exposing the school system to further funding challenges by creating a negative feedback loop that harms all students, not just those in advanced tracks. This is not just an educational issue, it is a community sustainability issue.

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**From:** Vikram Krish <vkrish77@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 12, 2025 12:41 PM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail; bill\_barnes@hcpss.org  
**Subject:** Proposed cuts to the GT Program

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County Executive Ball, members of the Howard County Council, members of the Howard County Board of Education, and Superintendent Barnes:

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my serious concern and strong opposition to the proposed cuts to the district's Gifted and Talented (GT) program. As a parent of a student in the GT program at Patapsco Middle School, I am shocked and dismayed that Howard County is even considering cutting funding for our brightest prospects.

These reductions signal a troubling disregard for the needs of advanced learners and risk undermining the academic potential of some of our district's most capable students. Gifted students have unique educational needs that cannot be met through general instruction alone. When these students are not appropriately challenged, the consequences are clear: disengagement, underachievement, and in some cases, behavioral issues born of frustration and boredom. Cutting GT programming undercuts the district's stated commitment to equity and excellence by denying students an environment in which they can grow at the pace and depth they require.

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Regards,  
Vikram Krishnaswamy.

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**From:** arkady lapidus <mktlpd@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, June 14, 2025 8:52 AM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** GT education cuts

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I was extremely concerned to hear that the county is considering cuts to the GT program in the school budget. I believe that the GT program is foundational to the educational success of the school district and to the overall economic success of the county. People move to this area specifically to attend some of the best schools in the country and the GT program showcases that success. I understand that budgeting requires trade-offs, but certain things need to be put on the no cut list and GT education must be a no cut item. I strongly oppose cuts to the GT program, cut anything else even programs that my child is involved in but leave this program alone.

Thank you for your consideration

Arkady Lapidus  
4526 Vinter Way

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

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**From:** chandan Jethwani <chandan.jethwani@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, June 14, 2025 12:35 PM  
**To:** boe@hcpss.org; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail; bill\_barnes@hcpss.org  
**Subject:** Funding for GT programs

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regards  
Chandan Jethwani