
From: yi han <hanyi1990@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 21, 2025 11:02 AM
To: CouncilDistrict1@howardcountymd.gov; CouncilDistrict2@howardcountymd.gov; CouncilDistrict4@howardcountymd.gov; Yungmann, David; CouncilMail
Subject: HCPSS Special Education Crisis

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 all County Council Members,

My name is Yi Han, who lives in Ellicott City. I'm an adult with Asperger's and currently serve as the director of QA at a startup AI company. I'm the father of two young boys on the autism spectrum and currently serve as the PTA representative of Waverly ES on SECAC, as well as a member of the Autism Society of Maryland's education committee. I'm also serving as one of the consultant for CAPA-SEEDS (<https://www.capa-hc.org/seeds-2/>).

I am writing this email to express our serious concerns regarding the state of special education in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). This concern is shared by numerous parents of special needs students, as well as teachers, staff, and members of the Howard County Education Association (HCEA), Howard County Association of Supervisors and Administrators (HCASA), Special Education Citizen Advisory Committee (SECAC), Autism Society of Howard County (AUSOM), and other stakeholders.

Special education in HCPSS is in crisis. Every year, more than 500 special needs students enroll, yet we face a staggering 114 vacancies in special education roles. This shortage overburdens staff, making it impossible to deliver all necessary services. In 2023, 41% of resignations were from special educators in their first year, highlighting unsustainable workloads and a lack of support. We cannot ignore the real reasons we struggle to hire enough special educators and paraeducators: overwhelming workloads, extra responsibilities beyond job descriptions, and under compensation. Competing with neighboring counties for a shrinking pool of educators necessitates higher starting salaries.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the county's share of funding for public schools has dropped from 58% to 53.59%. According to Howard County's most recent FY2024 Financial Audit, county revenues were underestimated by \$58.4 million, and expenditures were overestimated by \$24.7 million. This situation can be even more complicated this year on both state and federal levels. The county must take more responsibility for funding public education in the event of a decrease or impoundment of state and federal funding. Our students deserve the necessary resources for their education, and we must ensure that public schools receive their fair share.

This concern is shared by a significant number of parents, educators, and stakeholders. Regrettably, I am among the more composed parents. However, the urgency and gravity of this issue have been underscored by the fact-based, vivid, and deeply concerning testimonies presented during the

HCPSS FY26 budget hearings, HCEA appointments, SECAC appointments, and HCASA appointments. Notably, at least 70% of the testimonies address issues related to special education.

For your reference, you can view the meeting videos and written testimonies at the links below:

1. HCPSS FY26 Budget Hearing Video 1 <https://hcpssstv.v3.swagit.com/videos/327318>
2. HCPSS FY26 Budget Hearing Video 2 <https://hcpssstv.v3.swagit.com/videos/334430>
3. Written Testimonies <https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/hcpssmd/Board.nsf/public>.

Additionally, many parents have taken legal action against HCPSS due to non-compliance with their children's Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and violations of their legal rights to inclusive education. A group of distressed parents has also reached out to journalists, resulting in a series of investigations aired on WBAL 11 News. You can find the first part of the investigation (https://www.wbaltv.com/article/howard-county-schools-special-education-issues/63855175?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR0itYSJQq-IArsweYrCRpVM9ae-43GaPfslcFLz10FgSVICikeenD9EYcM_aem_GXyXrH0qWQ7sxYuXiT4I_w) and the second part will be aired next week.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Ms. Deb Jung for briefly addressing these issues at the latest public hearing of the HCPSS Board of Education. I have taken the time to write this detailed account to help you understand the dire situation faced by special education in HCPSS, before all the parents, teachers, principals, BOE and director of special education storm the door of county FY26 budget public hearing. The county government and county council need to take immediate action, as HCPSS cannot effectively address these challenges without proper funding.

I am open to further discussion about the situation and clarification regarding the information provided above. We believe that it is imperative to address these issues promptly to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for all students.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.
Sincerely,

From: Emily Braman <esbraman@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 28, 2025 8:18 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: URGENT: Please fully fund 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.]

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my deep concern about the potential lack of full funding for the Howard County Public School System's operating budget next year. Without adequate financial support, our schools face severe consequences, including teacher cuts, increased class sizes, and reductions in essential services.

Howard County's **special education programs** are **critical** to ensuring that every child, regardless of ability, receives the individualized attention and support they need to succeed. These programs are not luxuries—they are necessities that enable students with diverse learning needs to thrive. **Budget cuts would directly harm these children**, limiting access to specialized instruction and essential resources. **We cannot afford to undermine special education.**

Additionally, class sizes **must not** continue to increase. Our children are already learning in overcrowded classrooms, stretching teachers to their limits. Educators are **overworked, underpaid, and leaving the profession at alarming rates**. Larger class sizes mean less individualized instruction, more student struggles, and a decline in the overall quality of education. **Increasing class sizes while reducing resources is a failure of priorities—and we owe our students better.**

While ensuring proper funding for special education is paramount, we must also preserve **Gifted & Talented (GT) programs**, which provide advanced learners with the challenges they need to reach their full potential. Every child—whether they require specialized support or advanced opportunities—deserves the tools to thrive.

A fully funded budget is not simply a financial decision—it is an investment in the future of our children and the strength of our community. We urge you to prioritize education funding so that our schools can continue to offer high-quality education, reasonable class sizes, and equitable opportunities for all students.

Let's work together to ensure that Howard County schools remain a point of pride for our community.

Thank you for your time and attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

From: [Lisa Arseneault](#)
To: [Yungmann, David](#)
Subject: HoCo Schools need you, County Council!
Date: Monday, April 28, 2025 8:52:14 AM

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

County Councilperson David Yungmann,

Dear Members of the County Council,

The County Executive's budget will be devastating to our schools. Unless you restore funding now, the Board will be forced to make "tough decisions" to balance the budget, including increased class sizes, broken contracts for educators, program reductions, and reduced services for students which we DO NOT want to happen. As a Special Education Program Assistant, which was just created almost two years ago, I see firsthand what burdens our teachers are facing and how my role is helping to alleviate those burdens. Special Educators have so much more paperwork, data collections, reporting, and responsibilities than most staff members. If cuts are made (especially within Special Education) teachers may walk away from the stress of teaching for other jobs. Please DO NOT cut funding for Special Education! We want to keep Howard County as a top place to work and live.

Additional budget cuts will squeeze the classroom and will make educator workloads impossible. While it is understandable to be concerned about the outlook of the federal budget, it would be a grave mistake to underfund the main resource still attracting families to our county: public schools.

HCPSS staff like me are counting on you!

Sincerely,

Lisa Arseneault

Early Childhood Special Education Program Assistant

Lisa Arseneault

lisa_arseneault@hcpss.org

7396 Gardenview Dr

Elkridge, Maryland 21075

From: Taiwo Odogun <taiwoayo@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 29, 2025 11:16 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: HCPSS FUNDING

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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

Hello,

I am a parent of children in 5th grade and 11th grade. My 11th grader has Autism and needs the resources available in school so that he can reach his full potential over time. Howard county has always been one of the best counties for students and for special needs in particular.

I have watched my 5th grader grow in her confidence through the music programs at school. She watched her older brother, who played the trumpet and was in the band in high school before he went to college. His closest friends were all in the music department and the discipline and comrade developed is so beautiful.

Please restore funding to the level required to ensure that all the programs our children need are intact.

Thank you so much!
-Taiwo

From: Kevin Skolnik <kevinskolnik@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 3, 2025 9:42 AM
To: CouncilMail
Cc: Lauren Robbins
Subject: Please Fully Fund the HCPSS FY26 Budget Request

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 County Council,

As a concerned parent, community member, and supporter of public education, I urge you to fully fund the FY26 budget for Howard County Public Schools. You will see that there is a way forward that simply involves a reallocation of funding to HCPSS that will prevent losing teachers and critical services to our children.

The requested \$74 million increase is not an overreach — it is a necessary investment in preserving existing services for students. The increase is driven by unavoidable costs:

- \$36 million to retain current teachers amid inflation,
- \$10 million shifted from the state to the county,
- \$9 million in Blueprint-mandated programs, and
- The expiration of \$15 million in one-time funds that were used last year.

This is not about growing the system — it's about maintaining what we already have. Cutting funding now would reduce classroom support and programming just as the number of students requiring special education services continues to rise. In just one year, HCPSS added over 500 new IEPs, with another 500 projected — a clear signal that needs are increasing, not shrinking.

Meanwhile, the County is not without options. Howard County has seen consistent budget surpluses, and interest income from the general fund exceeded projections by tens of millions in both FY24 and FY25. The Spending Affordability Advisory Commission projects \$56 million in new revenue for

FY26. With careful prioritization and updated assumptions that reflect actual economic performance, the County has the capacity to fund this request.

We cannot afford to ask our schools to “do more with less” year after year. Students, teachers, and families deserve stable, fully supported educational environments. Please choose to invest in our children by maintaining funding levels that protect current staffing and services.

Sincerely,

Kevin Skolnik

Parent of 2 children at Swansfield Elementary School

From: Jennifer Peters <jerb405@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 15, 2025 1:09 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Restore funding to HCPSS!!!

Importance: High

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/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 at least \$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 the Howard County Public School System's share of the recurring General Fund Revenue has not kept up with historic norms and inflation.

My child receives special education services to enable her to reach her full potential. These cuts will put that at risk, which will lead us to consider moving to a different County the values their school system. We cannot afford more cuts.

Please prioritize students and restore funding to HCPSS.

Thank you-
Jennifer Peters
15008 High Forest Court,
Dayton MD 21036

From: snap@howardcountymd.gov
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2025 10:20 AM
To: Smith, Brenda; Anderson, Isaiah; Gelwicks, Colette; Respass, Charity
Subject: Case: CS0069893 – opened and unassigned



Case

Short Description: Support for HCPSS Operating Budget

Case Number: CS0069893

Case Opened: 06-12-2025

Constituent:

[VIEW CASE](#)

Details:

06-12-2025 10:20:11 AM EDT - Christiana Rigby Additional comments

From: Lian Zuali <lnzuali@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 10, 2025 12:57 AM
To: board@hcpss.org
Cc: CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>; Ball, Calvin
<cball@howardcountymd.gov>
Subject: Input on budget reductions

[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,

As a parent of a special needs child and a concerned member of the

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

I urge you to preserve essential programs and services that directly impact students special education.

To achieve fiscal responsibility, I suggest considering reductions non-essential travels.

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

Sincerely,
Lian Zuali

howardcountymd.gov



Ref:MSG6286991